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LIFE AND MINISTRY
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM BRAMWELL,
ETC. ETC.



James Oglethorpe

MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND MINISTRY

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM BRAMWELL;

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM HIS LETTERS;

LETTERS HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED; AND OTHER ORIGINAL MATTER.

BY

MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY.

“UN BRAVE ATHLÈTE DE JÉSUS CHRIST.”

BOSSUET.

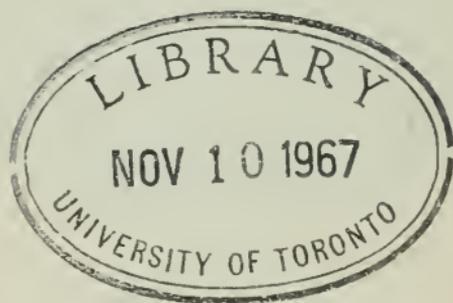
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TO THE
SURVIVING CONVERTS
UNDER MR. BRAMWELL'S MINISTRY,
THIS MEMORIAL
OF THEIR SPIRITUAL PARENT
Is Inscribed.

As the light
Not only serves to shew, but render us
Mutually profitable, so our lives
In acts exemplary, not only win
Ourselves good names, but do to others give
Matter for virtuous deeds by which we live.

CHAPMAN.



PREFACE.



CURSORY glance at this volume may naturally elicit an inquiry from those who are not of the Wesleyan persuasion—who was William Bramwell? We answer, in the words of his epitaph, that he was “*a chosen, approved, and valiant minister of Christ.*” If this statement be correct—and we believe that here a tombstone has spoken no more than the literal truth—it implies the very highest order of spiritual merit, and entitles the possessor of such an honorable reputation to the regard of every true-hearted disciple of the Redeemer. A man who carried on an intrepid warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and baffled these terrible opponents in almost every encounter—who succeeded (so far as human services can avail) in despoiling Satan’s kingdom of probably some thousands of subjects—who added troop after troop to the armies of Israel, and led them on to battle and victory—and who personally rose from an humble position in this life to a splendid eminence in the skies—may have little claim to the admiration of those who think that kings and warriors, statesmen and philosophers, are the legitimate objects of veneration; but he cannot be without interest to others who have once become sensible of the romantic grandeur of the Christian career, and who love to reflect on the deeds accomplished by the Chivalry of the Cross.

To most of the members of the religious community

with which Mr. Bramwell was immediately connected, this brief memorial might have been submitted without apology or observation. To those in particular who fondly revert to primitive Wesleyanism as one of the noblest embodiments of evangelical zeal, and to a race of ministers who generally entered the pulpit fresh and glowing from their baptism of fire, such an illustration of the age and the men as the present may not prove unacceptable. It refers to an individual on whom the Rev. George Marsden pronounced the brief but emphatic eulogium—"We [Wesleyans] have lost one of our brightest ornaments."

Two Memoirs of Mr. Bramwell have already been laid before the public; why a third, it may be asked?

There were many reasons; but it is enough to state the principal one—namely, that although two *memoirs* had been published, a *biography* remained unwritten. The first work was only a compilation; the second, a compilation from a compilation. Perhaps nothing more was intended in either case: certainly nothing more has been done. It is by no means pleasant, however customary, to disparage the labours of preceding writers, and therefore we gladly give them all the credit which may be due to their performances. Mr. Sigston, from his intimate acquaintance with Mr. Bramwell, was naturally indicated as a person well qualified to undertake the preparation of a memoir in the first instance. It must be obvious, however, to those who have perused his work, that it is nothing more than a simple compendium of the information which he possessed on the subject, and that he has made no attempt to cast his materials into a regular and connected narrative. It was therefore only regarded as a temporary compilation by those most interested in the subject. The Rev. Thomas Harris (whose name is attached to the second memoir) had,

on the other hand, no further connexion, we believe, with Mr. Branwell than that of professional fraternity. Under ordinary circumstances, such a qualification might perhaps have sufficed, although it is not generally the practice for strangers to meddle in these matters without some better title to interference than he can allege. Mr. Harris has, however, not only been wanting in the courtesy which the family might reasonably have expected from him—not only has he undertaken his memoir without their sanction, but, as the present volume proves, contrary to their interest. These, however, are minor points of remark. They vanish under pressure of a remarkable literary “indiscretion:”—we purposely employ the lightest accusative term in the English vocabulary, leaving it to others to adopt a sterner epithet, if such should be considered applicable. The reverend gentleman has published a memoir as his own production, which is *not* strictly his own. The book purports to be “by Thomas Harris, Wesleyan Minister,”—a form of expression which it would be almost superfluous to say implies that it was the original composition of the individual himself. So universal is this construction, that every one who reads the work in question—that is, in ignorance of its predecessor—must naturally assume every part of it, which is not expressly marked or indicated as the matter or thought of other writers, to be the genuine composition of the titular author. Such an inference, however, in this case, would be altogether fallacious. Mr. Harris has drawn nearly the whole of his materials from Mr. Sigston’s previous memoir; and in so doing has borrowed the very language of his predecessor, and used it as if it were his own.* There is no acknowledgment of the obligation: so far as we can ascertain, Mr. Sigston’s

* We speak of the first edition, never having seen the other.

name is not even mentioned in title-page, preface, or work itself, as his authority. We conceive that in justice some obscure corner or foot-note should have been devoted to a civil recognition of the gentleman to whom he stood so largely, and—we may say, for his facts—so exclusively indebted. Why this silence? Mr. Harris must be well aware that generous writers make it a point, when extracting materials from other productions, to employ those minute symbols called inverted commas: yet he has borrowed—borrowed—borrowed—and strangely neglected to intimate the fact in the customary manner. It is true the reverend gentleman may have thought it unnecessary to distinguish between the original and the derivative matter, seeing that the volume is nearly all quotation. But then he should have recollected that the distinction between an author and an abridger—a manufacturer and a retailer—in the republic of letters, is a fundamental one, and that very slight mistakes of this kind—mistakes of a single page, or even of a passage—have often exposed the unfortunate perpetrators to severe reprehension, and some very harsh phraseology. We know several very emphatic and uncompromising epithets which have been employed to characterise such occurrences.

The best conclusion we can draw is that Mr. Harris has written his book with a pair of scissors. We have nothing to say against these metallic functionaries: they have done their duty with great discretion, and seem to be very respectable and praiseworthy operatives. They made judicious incisions into Mr. Sigston's volume, and occasional inroads into Old Divines, Mr. Wesley's Works, the Wesleyan Takings, and Mr. Longden's Journal. True, the reader will occasionally experience a peculiar sensation, something like that produced by

the transition from a smooth wooden pavement to a road where the granite blocks are set on edge, or left in a state of complete dislocation. At other times, he will suddenly pass from a fine, glowing, tropical temperature, into a raw, drizzling atmosphere; or tumble in a moment from a towering eminence to the dark voids of bathos. But these uncomfortable vicissitudes are inevitable in this species of composition—scissors can only take things as they find them. If fidelity be a merit, Mr. Harris would certainly have been entitled to considerable credit—had he only acknowledged his originals. We scarcely thought it possible for any human being to write a memoir, and yet abstain with such invincible modesty from the introduction of a new fact or an original idea. He has not even changed the form of expression in many parts, and very little in others; but has magnanimously contented himself with the duty of shaking up Mr. Sigston's paragraphs and re-adjusting them, with divers interpolations from the authorities aforesaid. In a few places, indeed, we have detected passages of which the reverend gentleman may perhaps be considered the putative father; but a positive opinion on this point would be improper, unless we knew of what books his library was composed.

Having made these strictures upon Mr. Harris's abridgment, it is the more necessary to observe that, so far as Mr. Sigston's materials have been employed in the preparation of the *present* volume, those materials were, in the first instance, almost exclusively supplied by the family—that they still remain the property of the family, having been intrusted to Mr. Sigston's care for their benefit, and therefore that they might have been employed by the writers to a much greater extent than has been really required.

Perhaps the reader will indulge us with a few brief remarks on the subject of biography? These are not made for the purpose of intimating what is now done, but what we conceive ought to have been done. They may only serve to exhibit a gross discrepancy between theory and practice, but we are willing to pay the penalty of defective execution, if the principles themselves are approved. The duty of the biographer is by no means an easy one. 1. He must penetrate into the inner life of his subject; he must get to the *soul*, and live in it until he has become thoroughly familiar with its thoughts and feelings. It is difficult to do this, and therefore we have in general little more than outside delineation. We may have a memoir of a man's circumstances, occupations, associates, or the merest conventional adjuncts; but of the man himself, perhaps little or nothing. 2. Next, the biographer must not only describe the soul, but he must describe it in its true and legitimate *developments*. We do not want a mere statue, but a living moving creature, 3. And these developments must again be exhibited in their natural dependence and *succession*. Now, humble as these propositions may be in appearance—mere truisms, some may say—they contain, we believe, the essential principles of a successful life-history; and yet they are of rarer adoption than might be expected. The last in particular, points us to the chief attraction in a mortal's career. Human nature is interesting even in its insulated expressions, but infinitely more so in its continued evolutions. There is a great difference between a passing glance at a stage, when we see neither the beginning nor the end of the drama; and the absorbed feeling with which we follow the march of things from a definite starting-place to an uncertain goal, and from a simple commencement, to a grand but

complicated climax. Yet, in some degree or other, this latter kind of attraction is presented by every man's life, if that life be only surveyed as it should be. Each individual lives a romance—acts a drama. There is a meaning in all that is done, and every occurrence, however minute, may have literally some relation to, or influence upon, his general career and destiny. Take the lowliest of mortals, and add to your conception of his temporal being, the magnificent appendix of an Eternity! In a moment, and as if by magic, you have altered the whole complexion of his history. You make it intensely, almost intolerably, dramatic. The interest you feel in his proceedings is no longer listless or desultory; it becomes overpowering by the awful uncertainties in which his fate is involved. Every act seems then to be critical—every syllable, eloquent—every incident, momentous. There is a tragic depth or an epic grandeur about an existence thus surveyed. The fortunes of monarchs, and the adventures of heroes are but tame, trivial themes, compared with the thrilling romance of a spiritual career. If we could but hear the tale of a lost peasant, or a redeemed pauper, as told by himself *after death*, we should tremble to learn what triumphs and tragedies were in daily progress on every side of us. Destinies the most different in the Future may await those who on earth are the nearest neighbours; one to a throne—the other to a dungeon. Here, they may dwell in the same street or the same house,—hereafter, they may be sundered to the very poles of the universe. The man on your right may be toiling to heaven; on your left, travelling to hell;—yourself, whither?

The duty of the biographer therefore should be to grasp the great features of life, to exhibit not only the succession of events, but the succession of developments,

and to present the subject, not in mere detached and unconnected particulars, but in the gradual evolution of its essential elements from their commencement to their consummation. For this purpose he should strive to separate, to arrange, and combine the data which he has at command. Take, for example, a mass of lifeless materials—bones, mould, stones, and other refuse—and fling them down before an accomplished osteologist; he dissects the heap, picks out one bone, throws away another, joins limb to limb, and constructs a perfect skeleton from dislocated fragments; or if a part here and there is wanting, his knowledge and imagination enable him at once to supply the blank, and complete the outline. This, in a great measure, the biographer should be competent to do; but much more also. He must not only possess the selective and constructive power above mentioned, but he should be able to clothe the skeleton with flesh—to invest it with its own natural attributes and appearances—to breathe into it as it were the spirit of life—and to exhibit it with such signs of vitality, that the spectator may think he sees a man, and not a mere anatomy,—a living creature, and not a motionless corpse. One writer takes you to a valley of dry bones, where all is still, desolate, deathly: there lie the scattered limbs and mouldering relics; you may handle and arrange them as you like, but there is no breath passes over the slain, no sign of resuscitating power is displayed. Another, invokes the mysterious influence: at his call, it sweeps over the severed fragments which strew the ground: bone leaps to bone, and limb adjusts itself to limb: the dead are raised, and breathe, move, speak, and live again!

Such we conceive true biography ought to be. The ideal, however, is more easily imagined than realized.

For the present rapid sketch, we make no pretensions ; it cannot be said to be written in fulfilment of the views just intimated, and if it were, its slight character would scarcely have permitted any accurate exposition. The limits imposed have rendered it necessary to avoid disquisition, and to give the narrative in as condensed a form as was practicable.

It may be objected that this memoir is too laudatory. We hope it is not more so than the truth justifies. On the contrary, we may remark in all candour, that there has been a disposition to deal with the subject in a spirit quite as critical as complimentary. It was our wish to exhibit the mingled frailties and virtues of humanity, rather than the faultless perfections of some imagined paragon. But it is due to ourselves, and still more to the subject of the memoir, to state that it was difficult indeed to fasten the eye on foibles amidst such a blaze of Christian excellence. The light emitted was so pure, clear, sustained, and unwavering, that it would have required a spirit of no ordinary captiousness to have dwelt upon faults and infirmities. We may fairly say that the *inclination* to do justice to his defects as well as his merits, has not been wanting ; and that if the following pages should be deemed too eulogistic, they are not so because there was any wish to indulge in mere vague panegyric, but because the character under consideration really presented so little on the one hand to condemn, and so much on the other to applaud. On this point, however, it may be sufficient to quote the statement of one who knew it thoroughly ; we mean the Rev. Robert Wood :—

“ There is no ground to fear, that too high a character of Mr. Bramwell for holiness and devotedness to God, and as a man full of faith and of the Holy

Ghost, will ever be laid before the public. Indeed, to do justice to that character, is not an easy task. Perhaps the real worth of any great and eminent man—whether warrior, statesman, scholar, or divine—can neither be fully appreciated nor declared, except by his superiors in those very things in which the man himself excelled; for none but such can ascertain the difficulties in the way of his attainments, and the advantages, personal and relative, resulting from them. But to find a more holy or heavenly man than Mr. Bramwell, *Hic labor, hoc opus est.*”

The extraordinary incidents recorded of Mr. Bramwell—dreams, answers to prayer, supernatural influences, spiritual insight, and so forth—may be considered demurrable by many readers. Some will probably feel the greatest astonishment that such things should be chronicled in these unbelieving times. In the Appendix, we have stated the reasons for introducing even the most equivocal of these cases into the work, but it is right to remark in the outset, that we do not attempt to prescribe in such matters—we simply leave them to the consideration of each individual reader.

April, 1848.



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My dear Dr

Grace - mercy - and peace be multiplied. — God, the Everlasting God, is unchangeable: he never fails those who put their trust in him. — I have always found Him according to his word — whether to Justify or Sanctify — to heal the backsliding or restore Comfort to the soul.

W. Hamwell.



MEMOIR
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM BRAMWELL.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and Parentage—Cop Chapel—Sabbath Training—Moral Tendencies—Visits from the Holy One—Ailments—Liverpool Perils and Rescue—Apprenticeship and Incidents—Siege of Mansoul—Religious Lunacy—Mysterious Disease and Cure—The New Birth—Pecuniary Campaign against Sin—Spiritual Eclipse—Becomes a Wesleyan Disciple—Dilemma—First Draught from the Cup of Persecution—Interview with Mr. Wesley—Commences Lay-preaching—First Sermon—Toils and Results—Conflicts—Pulpit or Counter?—Temporary Appointment to Liverpool as a regular Minister—Recall and Settlement in Business—Another Change—The Christian Knight goes forth.

The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day.—MILTON.



WILLIAM BRAMWELL commenced his earthly career in February 1759. He was born at Elswick, a village situate in the rural part of Lancashire, known as the Fylde, and distant about a dozen miles from the town of Preston. It was by no means a locality of much promise. It presented the fewest facilities for the development of the intellectual faculties, and the scantiest materials for the culture of the religious sentiment. Both the period and the place of his nativity were seemingly inauspicious; but the one prepared him for a critical season for which his talents were perhaps best adapted, and the other served as an humble starting-post for paradise. He found his way from Elswick to the Everlasting City.

William was the tenth child of George and Elizabeth Bramwell. In all there were eleven—nearly the patriarchal

complement.* The father was proprietor of some landed property in the neighbourhood of Elswick, and by dint of industry attained such a state of competency as enabled him to bequeath a considerable sum to the children who survived him. In his character might be traced some of those peculiar qualities which were still more vividly imprinted on the mental physiognomy of the son. Inflexible integrity, an extraordinary attachment to truth, a punctilious observance of religious discipline, and a conscientious attention to the duties of life, were some of the paternal virtues which were found amplified and ennobled in the character of the child. Even that natural sternness of bearing which gave an appearance of austerity to the one, we discover lingering in the lineaments of the other. A glance at the portrait prefixed to this volume will scarcely fail to convey an idea of unbending resolution, amounting almost to severity of temperament. The massive countenance, compressed lips, and commanding eye could belong to no weak or pliable spirit.

At the distance of about a mile from Elswick there was, and still is, a chapel of ease belonging to the Established Church. As each Sunday returned, and the hour of service arrived, a devout-looking man and a matronly woman entered that chapel. A train of several children generally followed them. No matter whether it was summer or winter, storm or sunshine, the parents took their accustomed seats, and with them as many of the family as could prudently be brought. One, however, a child of thoughtful mien, made his way to the singers' pew, where a stool was always provided for his use. Standing upon this, to give the diminutive chorister some elevation, his fine voice might be heard throughout the chapel in every hymn. And sweetly he sung in that humble choir, as still more sweetly he now sings in the brilliant concerts above. With his rich and sonorous tones he began in childhood to chant the praises of his Maker, which at this moment he is rehearsing to the accompaniment of his golden harp, and in chorus with a myriad angel-tongues.

* Of this large family one still survives—Mrs. Jones, of Mount Vernon, Liverpool. The amiable character and affectionate disposition for which this sister is truly distinguished, elicited from Mr. Bramwell as fine a compliment as he ever paid to mortal. He was accustomed to say that if ever any one could get to heaven *without salvation*, it was Dorothy! Peter, the eldest son, was a youth of very promising talents. His parents wished him to devote himself to scholastic pursuits; but his taste was for a life of adventure. Failing to obtain their permission to adopt a seafaring career, he left his home by night, although his father had assured him that if he went, he must carry a parent's curse with him. The wayward youth took service in a Liverpool vessel engaged in the inhuman traffic for which that port, alas! obtained an unhappy notoriety, but shortly afterwards came to an untimely end; he was poisoned on the African coast whilst the vessel was freighting with human merchandise. John, the second son, became a Liverpool merchant, and amassed a considerable fortune, but died in the prime of life.

The sweet little singer of Cop Chapel—for such was the name of the building—is the subject of this biography. His parents saw their child thus engaged with great satisfaction: but neither of them anticipated the day when eager crowds should dwell upon the utterances of his lips—when those musical tones should convey the message of mercy to the heart-stricken sinner; or deepening into righteous indignation, pronounce the terrible curses of the law upon the impenitent transgressor.

The Sabbath was strictly observed by George Bramwell's family in the house as well as in the sanctuary. Part of the day was regularly devoted to the perusal of the Scriptures, and to each of the children a certain portion was allotted. William was thus trained to regard the sacred volume with peculiar veneration long before its sublime significance was understood, or even surmised. It would be interesting to contrast the aspect which the Bible bore to his eye in these early days with that which it assumed in the maturity of his ministry. The pleasant story-book of childhood was afterwards transformed into the thrilling Tale of Redemption. That system of precepts which, to his young understanding, might seem dry and difficult, became pregnant with truths of personal and eternal moment. The scheme of salvation, then seen but dimly and in its narrowest dimensions, afterwards burst upon his view as vividly, perhaps, as it has ever done upon human intelligence, and expanded into a magnificent spectacle upon which even angel-eyes might gaze and feast for ever. Many a dead letter was destined to become a living truth. Page after page, then dark and unmeaning to his eye, began to glow in time with supernatural brilliancy:—here, flashing with the angry denunciations of the law—there, beaming with the mild radiance of pardon and promise. The boy little thought, when thus occupied with his Sabbath exercises, that he was designed by Providence to spend his days in interpreting the truths and mysteries of that very book.

The instructions of the parent were not in vain. William manifested, and always continued to manifest, an extraordinary regard for the consecrated day. This was occasionally exhibited in a curious manner. In his youth he was fond of flowers, and collected a considerable number, which he kept in his own bedroom. Amongst these were several that were both scarce and delicate. Perhaps he would discover some Sunday morning, from the drooping appearance of his favorites, that he had forgotten to water them on the preceding evening according to custom. Well! they must languish through the

day: die, even, if needs be. Not a drop of water would the boy bestow upon his fragile charge, lest such an act should infringe the sanctity of the Sabbath! If in this there was too much Pharisaism, it was a symptom of excellent promise in one so young.

Another trait in the parent's character was copied in that of the son. George Bramwell was noted for his scrupulous observance of the truth. A falsehood from his lips was deemed impossible. To all his acquaintances this incorruptible veracity was so well known, that a simple statement on his authority carried with it as much weight and conclusiveness as the solemn affirmation of another. Did Neighbour Bramwell say so-and-so? Then it must be true, whatever was declared to the contrary. William was therefore taught this virtue by example as well as by precept; and many were the occasions on which its firmness was tested and manfully displayed. Truth in general saves a man a world of trouble; but there were emergencies in his career—as there are in all others—when its temporary disregard might have promised some considerable advantage. His uncompromising spirit, however, never sought—never sanctioned—never accepted a benefit at the cost of his integrity.

With such a training, it was not extraordinary that the plastic materials of boyhood should be stamped with virtuous impressions. But this discipline accorded well with a character which seemed to be naturally distinguished by great conscientiousness and decided moral tendencies. In some cases juvenile puritanism leads to adult profligacy: the stern restraints of a parent may actually engender the lax principles of a son. Here, however, the boy was "father to the man." William Bramwell in the last year of his life was the same in his moral characteristics as William Bramwell in his teens. Time only confirmed and mellowed the ethical elements which youth exhibited.

Ethical we say—because, with all their rigorous discipline, it does not appear that his parents were capable of carrying him beyond the sphere of morality into that of "vital religion." They did not teach him the necessity of a practical and spiritual regeneration. They did not tell him of the marvellous work which must be wrought in his heart *beyond* all moral reformation whatever—of a miracle greater in its consequences than the cleansing of the lepers, or the raising of Lazarus. But he found another instructor. While yet a child of seven summers he heard a knocking at the "door of his heart." A voice gently, but earnestly, solicited admission. Often did he

listen to the mysterious accents of this applicant—at one time swelling into solemn strains of admonition; at another sinking into the sweet winning tones of entreaty. Occasionally the still small whisper—still and small as it was—smote upon his soul like the trumpet of doom: as his father read the Scriptures aloud in the family, the boy would thrust his fingers into his ears to shut out the sounds which filled him with unutterable dread. He could rarely listen unmoved. He learnt at length that this voice was the voice of God. It was the Spirit—the third Person in the Trinity—who stood at the door! Then he learnt also that, young as he was, many a sin was laid to his account; that for him there was an eternity as well as for angels and demons; that he too was solemnly interested in the fearful alternative of everlasting happiness or everlasting woe; and that this life was but a brief prologue to the endless enjoyments of heaven, or the dark, dismal tragedy of hell. To a mind naturally thoughtful, these were truths which could not be lightly addressed; neither could they be readily dismissed. The voice was not silenced; the suitor was not repelled. The surrender indeed was not immediately made. For some time his young heart continued in suspense. Without was the Spirit, striving to effect an entrance, and patiently urging his merciful appeal; within was conscience, pressing him to submit and be saved. But the day came when these were successful: the door was opened, the Spirit entered, and that soul was ultimately occupied as an earthly dwelling-place for the Most High.

The bodily tenement was also beset as well as the incorporeal tabernacle. Many and afflictive were the maladies under which he suffered during his childhood. The ague harassed him especially. The smallpox, which he encountered in his sixth year, occasioned him so much torture, that when the disorder attained its climax, he rushed out of the house, hurried to a pond in the neighbourhood, and plunged his whole person into it. The result, however, was not such as might have been expected. An eruption ensued, but the crisis passed, and after a time the boy recovered. During these periods of illness the sick-room was not always filled with the sounds of suffering; the same mellow voice which was so often heard in the choir of Cop Chapel frequently stole upon the ear as it sang psalms and praises to God. This, indeed, was his favorite occupation during the tedious hours of recovery.

Boyhood was spent in the little world of Elswick. His education was therefore but scanty; the village could furnish little instruction, and for such a sphere little was expected.

The "ample page" of knowledge had never been fully unfolded in that humble locality, and William was not more favoured than his neighbours. In after years the deficiencies of youth were partially repaired by the exertions of manhood; but his opportunities were always too limited, and the duties of his calling too pressing, to permit him to indulge in the acquisition of learning to any great extent. Perhaps in his case, and for his particular work, the absence of mere scholastic indoctrination was a positive advantage; it might have weakened the somewhat rugged energy, or disturbed the pointed simplicity, which contributed so largely to his future success.

In time it became necessary that William should seriously apply himself to labour. His father had already found him occupation on the farm he cultivated until his sixteenth year; but a higher grade of employment was thought desirable, and it was at length decided to train the youth as a merchant. His parents little imagined that his business was to be the winning of souls, and his calling purely spiritual. William was therefore despatched to Liverpool, where his eldest brother, John, was already established in a mercantile character. The transition from a small sequestered village to a great maritime metropolis could not fail to be impressive, but the effect upon his mind was extraordinary; the place inspired him with horror. The corruption he witnessed deeply troubled his scrupulous conscience; the gaiety and dissoluteness of a large seaport shocked his village puritanism. So powerfully did these feelings operate, that he believed himself to be in imminent danger so long as he continued within—what appeared to him—a guilty Gomorrah. He concluded that his spiritual prospects were in continual jeopardy. His imagination crowded the streets with phantoms of evil, and discovered snares and pitfalls and precipices at every turning. It seemed to his excited sensibility, as if he had been drawn into one of Satan's choicest settlements upon earth! To remain, he believed was to perish. He therefore entreated his parents to permit him to leave, and though they could not appreciate these overstrained scruples, they yielded at length to his wishes. To him, the summons home came like a rescue from the jaws of death. With indescribable satisfaction, he turned his back upon Liverpool and repaired to his native place. For a youth to conceive so strong a dislike to a town presenting such attractions to simple villagers, was somewhat remarkable; but the incident is rendered far more extraordinary by the fact that the same youth who thus fled from spiritual peril, and in

so doing renounced very favorable temporal prospects, was at the time rather moral than religious, and certainly destitute of the experimental piety which he afterwards attained. But the impression made on his mind by his Liverpool residence was permanent. Even in after-life he adverted to this episode in his career as one fraught with eternal danger, and often expressed a conviction that, had it been prolonged much further, it would have led to his spiritual destruction. Only a few weeks before he died, he said to Mrs. Bramwell, with peculiar solemnity, "I fear, had I remained I should have lost my soul!" Like Bunyan's pilgrim, he looked back to the city from which he had escaped with a shudder when he thought on the peril, and a thanksgiving when he remembered the deliverance.

In this process of reasoning, William appeared to forget that the Almighty exerted the same providential power in Liverpool as in Elswick. One place is as near heaven or hell as another. There was a narrow path leading to the gates of the eternal city from Liverpool, as well as a smooth spacious highway to the regions of everlasting night. The merchant and mechanic of a busy town may be not less safe, and far more useful, than the cloistered monk or the insulated recluse. The same terrors which drove our sensitive youth from Liverpool, might perhaps have driven him from society altogether. Fortunately his argument, which was properly applicable to every latitude, was practically arrested by a particular locality. If he had carried it to its natural limits, it would have conducted him from a busy town to a lonely cell, and converted a useful citizen into a selfish solitary. A similar argument—to give it a respectable appellation—has despoiled the world of an incalculable amount of spiritual power as well as of temporal advantage. It has wasted the raw material of humanity, so to speak, to a lamentable extent, and deprived mankind of the interest—the usury—which might have accrued from many talents unwisely buried. Christianity teaches a man not to court peril; but it also teaches a still grander lesson—not to shun but to conquer it, when it crosses his path. Perhaps, however, the simplest view we can take of this incident is, that William did not think his way to heaven lay through Liverpool at all. There might also be some peculiar reasons—some particular temptations—which, if known, would fully justify the strong feeling he exhibited; and it is not impossible that the unhappy fate of his brother Peter (to which reference has already been made), might have had some effect in producing a sentiment of dislike or distrust.

And now that he returned to Elswick, the question arose again as to a secular calling; for at this period he had no thought of a sacred one. After some deliberation, it was decided that he should be a currier; and accordingly he was bound apprentice to a Mr. Brandreth at Preston. Satan, he found apparently, was neither so powerful nor so popular in this locality as at Liverpool. Here he thought he might dwell in comparative security. This peaceful inland town, although it bore the title of "Proud Preston" for some reason or other, was not strewn with the snares of the devil as thickly as the gay seaport he had forsaken. The integrity for which he had trembled there, stood steadfast here. In his new situation he proved himself to be honest, upright, and industrious; and his master soon learnt to appreciate these good qualities. But there was one peculiarity which at first occasioned some surprise. The apprentice was too candid and veracious! He would neither utter nor second anything like a mis-statement—not even in the way of business! Preston tradesmen were like other tradesmen, and occasionally mystified their customers by exaggerating the merits of their commodities,—a commercial failing which the millennium will probably banish. One day, Mr. Brandreth's salesman, who not only indulged in this practice himself, but frequently supported his falsities by an appeal to the apprentices, called upon William to confirm an inaccurate representation he had made respecting the quality of some article. It was the first occasion on which the youth's services were thus required—it was also the last. To the great horror of the salesman, the reply was a direct contradiction. "No, sir: the quality of the article is *not* so good as you have stated it to be!" And to increase his confusion, this blunt denial was given in the presence of several individuals, who took care to make the incident tolerably public. Many a master would have dismissed a subordinate for a lesser breach of trade-morality; and therefore it is pleasant to reflect that this sally was not only pardoned but, it seems, unrebuked. The jesuitism which sometimes prevails at the counter could never have been drilled into a brain like William's, and Mr. Brandreth was too honorable to make the attempt. Strange that masters ever should! Many gravely expect their assistants to practise the art of cheating upon customers daily; upon themselves, never. They imagine that a subordinate can utter falsehoods *ad libitum* as against a buyer, and yet that his virtue shall remain perfectly incorruptible as against the seller!

This little incident proved useful in the end both to the master and his servant. For the latter, it won great respect

and general confidence; for the former, an extension of business and a large increase of customers. The young apprentice manifested the same intrepid honesty in other ways. He became cognizant of certain peccadilloes committed by his companions in the shop; he denounced them at once to the master. This step was more daring than the former, because it might have exposed him to constant persecution on the part of his comrades; but even when his integrity seemed to take the odious form of treachery, William was found both fearless and faithful.

Mention has been already made of the siege which the Spirit laid to the soul of the youth, and of the ultimate triumph of the Holy One; but as yet that triumph was not achieved. It was now, however, that these divine operations were urged with more vigour and impressiveness. The "arrows of conviction" flew fast and pierced deeply. The "glittering sword" of the Spirit was freely wielded, and sharp were the wounds which it inflicted. His conscience was kept in a state of continual disquietude. Whatever might be his moral purity, it could afford him no religious peace. For some time he endeavoured to find comfort in studying the Scriptures and pursuing a course of solitary devotion. Night after night the apprentice turned from his business to his Bible, and pored over its pages until the hour for sleep had arrived, and often was overpast. But this he could not do without obstruction. Candles were refused him, in order to check his nocturnal studies. The master could not comprehend such severe application, and therefore availed himself of the theory which secular men generally apply to ardent devotees. He asserted that though "William Bramwell was an excellent servant, yet in matters of religion he was *mad*." The youth, however, was not to be disheartened by a charge of religious lunacy; he had already begun to suspect that this madness must be carried still further before he could entertain any satisfactory hope of heaven. Nor was he to be thus easily restrained in his Scriptural researches. When candles were refused him, he waited until the family retired for the night, and then stretching himself upon the hearth, with his Bible before him, he groped his way from verse to verse with aching eyes, by the dull, painful glow of the embers, until the print became illegible. The dim but scorching illumination which the cinders flung upon his organs, was no unapt emblem of the severe but partial light which the inspired volume at the same time flung upon his heart. It burnt more than it enlightened.

He had now fairly entered upon that mysterious stage of mental conflict which must generally precede the greatest event of human existence—the New Birth. With some it is happily of short duration; but with him it was a painful and protracted process. The sharp but summary struggle, which sometimes converts the sinner into a triumphant believer within the compass of a few hours, was here superseded by a fierce and agonizing warfare, which lasted for months. His spirit lay writhing beneath a crushing load of sins, both real and imaginary, waiting for the hour of deliverance, and suffering meanwhile all the pangs of uncertainty as to his eternal destiny. His troubled conscience subjected him to many superfluous tortures. One bitter, but apparently unfounded, charge which he brought against himself, was that of filial disobedience. After a visit to his parents at Elswick, he was one night returning to Preston, when this feeling became so tormenting, that he dropped on his knees in a lane, and prayed in great anguish that God would pardon him for his ingratitude and undutifulness. On his arrival at Preston, he retired to his chamber, and flung himself on the floor in a paroxysm of remorse. He could obtain no relief until he met his father again after a lapse of several days—and days of misery they were—when the self-indicted culprit confessed his imaginary crimes, and implored forgiveness. George Bramwell was greatly surprised, and inquired what he had done that he brought such heavy charges against himself. William then learnt from his father's lips that he was not only deemed guiltless, but his filial obedience in all respects approved; and with this satisfactory assurance, the painful delusion which had racked his mind for many days was dispelled.

But if his sorrow for supposed offences was removed, it was needful that he should continue penitent for real transgressions. Pardon from his heavenly parent had not yet been procured. The great object which he now sought, was complete deliverance from guilt, and amendment of life. The method he proceeded to employ, according to the light he then possessed, was popular and plausible—it was fleshly mortification; for the papal plan of ingratiating sinners with heaven was far from unknown at Preston. William thought that the soul might be chastised through the body, and therefore began to treat the latter with great severity. He frequently abstained from food; sometimes, it is related, he pared off the skin, or cut away the flesh, at the extremities of his fingers, and, in order to prolong the pain, would not permit the wounds to close for some days. Occasionally he

left his bed when the rest of the household were buried in slumber, descended to the kitchen, and there sprinkling a quantity of coarse sand in a corner, and baring his knees, passed hours together in prayer, notwithstanding the torture of his position. All recreation and indulgence, however innocent, were abandoned for the time. Every opportunity for retiring into penitential privacy was seized. On holidays, whilst his fellow-apprentices wandered away in search of amusement, William repaired to a wood in the vicinity of Preston, mounted a shady tree, and hid himself from human gaze amidst its foliage, where he wrestled in his spiritual agony from morn till evening, and from that leafy confessional tears of contrition trickled to earth, and cries of entreaty ascended to heaven. At other periods, when the business of the day had been finished at an early hour, the heart-stricken apprentice would set out from Preston to brood over his spiritual sorrows in a solitary ramble, and occasionally travelled on until he reached his native village; yet such was his misery, or so powerful his self-denial, that he would not enter his father's house, nor acquaint any of the family with his presence. The same evening he would retrace his steps, and conclude a dreary walk of more than twenty miles, without perhaps lightening his load of sorrow in the least.

Week after week was consumed in this fearful struggle. The iron hand of conscience was heavy upon him. His mind was torn by spiritual fears; his body tormented by needless austerities. The result was such as might be anticipated—health gave way under this combined attack. His countenance grew pallid, his frame became attenuated, and symptoms of decay were palpably exhibited. Medical advice was procured by his friends, but the disease baffled their scrutiny. No wonder; for it was substantially one which no human medicaments could heal—no human surgery could ever eradicate. The physicians could not explain so strange a disorder, and therefore pronounced it a “nervous complaint.”

There was another physician, however, found in Preston, who perceived the true secret of this malady, and speedily accomplished a cure. One Sunday, when William attended church to receive the Sacrament, he met with the “good physician,” the Divine One whose profession it is to heal the sick and recover the dying. Whilst receiving the mystical symbols from the clergyman, the marvellous cure was performed. At the touch of the Saviour the disease was rebuked; the leprosy was cleansed, and the ponderous load of guilt and care under which he had so long groaned seemed to melt

away with magical facility. As the contrite apprentice knelt at the table of the Lord, the recording angel in heaven drew his pen through the memorials of the youth's transgressions, and wrote against his name—**PARDONED!** It was the hour in which the mysterious process of regeneration was completed. Strange that so short a time should make so great a change! He went condemned—returned acquitted; he knelt in fetters—rose in freedom; he began the day a drooping disconsolate penitent—concluded it, a grateful exulting believer. The dismal night of sorrow was ended; the day-spring from on high dawned on a spirit long shrouded in darkness; the sun of righteousness majestically rose above the horizon, and although clouds and mists occasionally impaired its lustre, and once, for a season obscured its splendour, yet that glorious orb had now risen on a soul which was never to see it set.

This was the New Birth.

A new life now commenced. The heart which had long lain dead in trespasses and sins, had been quickened by the divine influence, and soon gave signs of spiritual vitality. The body also threw off its mysterious burden; the "nervous complaint" speedily vanished, and health was completely restored. The bitterness of his recent trials was compensated by the ecstacy consequent upon so sudden a deliverance. He had passed through a noviciate well adapted to give point and decision to his faith and practice as a Christian. Prolonged tortures—unexpected change—glorious emancipation—constituted three stages of spiritual experience which could not be easily forgotten. Painful as such a preface to a religious life must ever be, it will generally impart a degree of emphasis to a man's character, and of energy to his career, which cannot be expected in cases where such stern preliminaries have not been encountered. What is painfully won is usually appreciated much better than the ready prize of a single struggle.

William accordingly entered upon his work as a Christian with extreme ardour; and in his new militant character began to make war upon sin with all his ability. There was one peculiar feature in the tactics which he at first pursued. He would rebuke sinners wherever he found them, and exhort them to amend their lives; but if rebuke and exhortation were alike unavailing, he would try to purchase their obedience by means of *money*. Many who could not understand sterling arguments, could appreciate sterling coin, and yielded to a bribe what they would not to a homily. In this way, he arrested many an oath, and checked many a petty delinquency.

It must have been strange to see the youthful proselyte stop a sinner—a drunkard, for instance, on his way to the alehouse, in order to treat with him for the relinquishment of his meditated sin; and pay down the price immediately on adjusting the bargain. And very strange, too, to observe how cheerfully the purchaser emptied his pockets in order to obtain a single promise of amendment, or exulted when he had feed a transgressor into a momentary observance of duty. All the money he could command was expended in this pecuniary campaign against wickedness. The principle was in itself unsound, however good the motive; for virtue is not such a marketable commodity as he seemed to think it then; nor would it be prudent, even if practicable, to bribe men into keeping the ten commandments. He did not see that the individual who was incapable of doing his duty without a handsome *douceur*, was about as criminal for accepting one in a matter of obligation as he would have been in committing the intended offence. The method, however, could only be tried with the poor and the young; reproof and exhortation must suffice with others not accessible to pecuniary inducements, for William permitted few to escape him in whose conduct he discovered any flaw. There was little respect of person. In both ways, his activity was remarkable, and his zeal indefatigable. At one time he was found administering advice with great modesty to some respectable culprit; at another presenting money to some ragged youth as the price of his abstinence from Sabbath-violation; now, he was remonstrating, in indignant language, with some profane speaker; and again, tracking the drunkard into a public-house, and endeavouring, with all his powers of persuasion, to avert the impending debauch. The fearlessness he exhibited, and the blunt reproofs which he delivered, sometimes exposed him to considerable abuse. An old woman who lived near his master's shop, and who was greatly addicted to swearing, one day shocked him by the utterance of some blasphemies. William wrote her a note, in which he quoted several Scriptural denunciations against profanity, and told her plainly that she would suffer the pains of hell unless she repented of her evil practices, and reformed her life. This was too much for the termagant, who went immediately to the house of one of William's friends, in a transport of rage, and swore that the writer was a "Methodist devil." Such, it seems, was in her opinion, the most opprobrious epithet which could be applied to man or demon!

After some time had been spent in this way, his happiness

was temporarily impaired, and his Christian progress for a while impeded. Fond of sacred music, he had attached himself to the church singers at Preston; hoping, also, to improve his piety by uniting with them in chanting the praises of God. He did not remember that men may often sing psalms as they may preach sermons—without religion. Amongst these companions he found no sympathy as regards his spiritual views; but, continuing to consort with them, his sanctity was silently undermined. They practised singing on week-days at an alehouse, and in pursuing their musical exercises, William was drawn into society, and placed in a situation, which gradually abated the fine glow of enthusiasm, and for a time induced a state of languor and debility.

The sun of righteousness which had lately shone with such brilliancy on that soul was now about to suffer a partial eclipse: the world was gliding in between, and the shadow it projected, grew deeper and denser every instant.

This unhappy result was due in a great measure to the absence of Christian fellowship. He had found no companions to share in his fervent aspirations, and none of his friends or associates appeared to have been baptised with the same fiery baptism as himself. He had stood insulated in his enthusiasm. At one time, indeed, he met with an individual, who was well qualified to fill the place of Christian comrade and counsellor. This was a young man—Mr. Roger Crane—a member of the Methodist society, who, having heard much of William's religious struggles, sought his acquaintance. A strong attachment was soon awakened between them, and the maturer experience of the Wesleyan disciple promised to be of great service to the less practised follower of Christ. Unfortunately, however, this intimacy was soon dissolved. Mr. Crane invited William to hear a Methodist preacher; but such was the antipathy with which the new sect was then regarded, that George Bramwell had sternly forbidden his family to form the slightest connexion with it, and had also insisted that William should never attend its ministry. The latter, perhaps, at that time, entertained almost as strong a dislike to the community as his father, and therefore a cordial intercourse between the two youths in matters of religion could not be of long duration. It was almost as difficult then for the Churchman to deal with the Wesleyan as the Jew with the Samaritan of old. Their friendship was broken, and in a short time wholly ceased, thus depriving William of the spiritual help which his almost solitary position so urgently demanded. The decline of his piety was consequently accelerated; the world

seemed to be stealthily resuming its sway over his soul; within that new-built shrine the Spirit appeared to be fluttering as if its departure were at hand; the fire on the altar grew faint, and flickered as if on the eve of extinction; without stood the unclean ones, waiting for the moment when it should be again abandoned to their polluted tread—when all its recent glories should be effaced, and all its former abominations restored.

He could not but know that his state was critical. He became alarmed at the peril, and looked around him for assistance. His heart misgave him, and he sunk into despondency. Would God indeed desert a temple he had built with so much trouble? Would he leave it again to the spoilers?

He would not—did not!

Comfort came from a quarter where the poor youth least expected it; the fading fires of his religion were recruited by means of an agency on which he had little calculated. It was that very ministry he had despised and rejected—the ministry of the Methodists!

In spite of the injunctions of his parent, and in defiance of his own prejudices, William was induced to accompany a fellow-workman, Robert Looker, to a Wesleyan service. It had struck him that the persecution which this sect encountered might be an evidence of its merits. “My Bible,” said he to Looker, “tells me that they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, and these people are vilified and persecuted indeed.” At the earliest opportunity, therefore, they repaired to the place where the Methodists worshipped. It was a small, mean house: the congregation was scanty, not more than a dozen besides themselves, and these of the humblest pretensions. Yet there he heard a sermon which made a powerful impression upon his drooping spirit; and there, too, he learnt that Wesleyan doctrine was not the delusive and fanatical heresy he had blindly imagined. He found he had done what is of daily occurrence—tried and condemned a system without knowing anything about it. He left the place cheered and enlightened.

He went again. Feeling that he had offended his former acquaintance, Mr. Crane, by refusing to listen to the Methodists, and convinced that his prejudice against them was unfounded, he sent him word that his sentiments were now changed. Mr. Crane immediately forgot all that had transpired, and took William one evening to hear the Rev. Andrew Inglis. The event, simple as it appeared, was fraught with consequences of the utmost importance. It affected, if it did not actually

determine, the future career of the young apprentice. During the services of that evening he formed a resolution, of which his whole after-life was but the fulfilment. He who had been educated in abhorrence, of all dissent—who had rashly promised to eschew Methodism in particular—who had so recently sacrificed a Wesleyan companion and an estimable friend at the shrine of bigotry—and had always treated its professors with contempt and distrust, then determined to cast in his lot with them, and to become a despised disciple of a despised community! “This,” said he to Mr. Crane, as they turned towards their homes that evening, “is the preaching I have long wanted to hear. These are the people with whom I am resolved to *live and die!*”

Only a short time before this event occurred, a friend had lent him the works of Mr. Wesley; but the volumes were hastily returned, as if the plague were in them, accompanied by a declaration that he durst not venture to read them lest they should “*destroy his religion!*” Only a short time after the same event William was enrolled a member of the methodist society, met in a methodist class,* and had become an ardent pupil of the venerable methodist apostle!

But before he took this important step he had to discuss a perplexing question. What would his parents say—more, what would they *do*? To conquer his own prejudices against Methodism was an effort he had never anticipated; but to conquer theirs was an achievement he could not reasonably expect to accomplish. He well knew their determined antipathy to the system and its professors: he was aware that his change would be regarded in the light of a flagrant apostacy: he felt moreover that he should be treated as a disobedient son, and might probably suffer severely in his temporal prospects not less than in his family relations. The dilemma was gloomy and disheartening. A son, whose filial feelings were of so delicate a nature that he had spent days in bitter remorse for imaginary offences, could not contemplate a proceeding which he knew would be execrated by his parents as the most heinous of transgressions without experiencing the profoundest solicitude. But he did not long hesitate. The same decision of character which had induced him to abandon Liverpool for a meaner locality to preserve his morals, now constrained him to renounce the Establishment for a calum-

* For the information of non-Wesleyan readers, we may state that a class consists of a number of members of the society, who meet weekly for the purpose of reporting on their spiritual state and progress, obtaining counsel from their leader, and enjoying Christian fellowship.

niated community in order to promote his religion. Without an apparent misgiving as to the propriety of his determination, he became what his parents had denounced—what he himself had hitherto abhorred—an acknowledged Methodist!

His family were soon apprized of the event, and under circumstances which rendered it peculiarly distressing to them, and unfortunate for himself. A short time after its occurrence, George Bramwell and his household removed to Preston. Their object was to be near William, whose apprenticeship had now terminated, and whose society they were anxious to enjoy. The fondest hopes were entertained with regard to his future career, and the warmest respect was manifested for his upright character and exemplary morals. What was their consternation on learning that he had become a Methodist! The son whose orthodoxy they deemed invulnerable, had lapsed into heresy, and was now a determined apostate! They could scarcely believe it. In their estimation, he could hardly have committed a fouler delinquency. The blow was a severe one for the parents: the crisis a painful one for the son. Remonstrances were tried—but these could not shake his convictions; entreaties also, but these could not lure him back to his ancient fold; menaces lastly, but he was not to be terrified from his fixed and unalterable purpose. So great indeed was the irritation his parents experienced, that they threatened to withhold from him all assistance on commencing business. The first interview which he had with them after they made the discovery was stormy indeed. His mother was shocked beyond measure; his father exasperated to such a degree that he stamped on the floor, and acted as if bereft of his senses. The poor culprit drank the first bitter draught of religious persecution from a cup which his own parents presented. The gall they mingled with its contents was the sharpest element of all. His duty to God was treated as disobedience to them. His religion was considered rebellion. For the first time in his life, William thus found himself placed in an attitude of direct hostility towards those whom he had ever loved and obeyed. This too was at a period when he must especially look to them for counsel and support in his temporal undertakings. But he would make no compromise; cost what it might, he conscientiously believed it to be a duty to serve his God in the society he had adopted; and therefore, regardless of solicitations, threats, and opposition, he went fearlessly onwards. Like a greater than himself—Luther—he would doubtless have done so if it had “rained Duke Georges,” and devils had been as numerous in the narrow way he had

determined to travel as Martin fancied they might be in his route to Worms. "You shall have no money to begin business; you may be a journeyman all your life," was the menace of the irritated parent. "Well, be it so," the son might have said; "at any rate, I will be God's journeyman, then."

Happy for himself, and still happier perhaps for others, was this determination. Had he but clung to his father's prejudices, an earnest but practical soul, which found full scope for its powers in the ample field of early Methodism, might have vainly expended its strength in observing the cold decencies, and performing the colder duties, which in those days too frequently constituted the sum and substance of practical religion. In God's good providence, thousands were destined to receive the bread of life from his hands: the famished were to be fed—the captives unloosed—the mourners comforted—the sick restored—the spiritually dead revived. If his parents had prevailed—if his resolution had faltered, he might have lived and died a Preston tradesman, instead of a Christian warrior. A plain slab might now have told that there an upright and respectable individual passed his days in honour, and ended them in peace; whereas his epitaph has been written on many hearts, and his name is still cherished in many a living memory. His own soul he might have secured from death; but not have won the glory which his spirit now prizes most—that of having turned many a sinner to righteousness, and gained many a victory over the legions of evil. There was more involved in this crisis than either parents or child imagined! And in the end the former were themselves benefited by the altered opinions of their son, who ceaselessly importuned them to seek that practical and entire regeneration of heart on which the true Wesleyan ever insisted. In after days, he saw with intense satisfaction that his counsels had not been wholly in vain; the good he had himself received from the community, was in some degree imparted to them.

Meanwhile the gloom which overspread his soul and darkened his spiritual prospects had been considerably relieved, but was not yet wholly removed. Conscience was still chilled by the remembrance of his partial estrangement from God. He wanted the abounding joy which attests and accompanies a complete reconciliation with an offended Creator. Happily, however, he did not want it long. Mr. Wesley passed through Preston about this period, and came into contact with the still sorrowing disciple. Their intercourse was brief, but important. "Well, brother," said the apostle, "can you praise God?"—"No, sir," was the laconic reply. Wesley

raised his hands, and smilingly rejoined, "Well, but perhaps you will *to-night*." These words were prophetic. That very evening William *did* praise God: the peace he sought was found; all the anxiety he had endured was dispelled; the soul now emerged from its temporary obscuration, and the sun of righteousness poured its rays without obstruction upon that delighted heart.

The eclipse was over!

Saved himself, he now sought the more earnestly to assist in saving others. His own spiritual emancipation thus far accomplished, he returned with augmented energy to the work of freeing those who were yet in bondage. The longing he had formerly displayed for the conversion of sinners, became an absolute passion,—an imperious and almost irresistible impulse. He grasped at every opportunity of doing good, and flung himself energetically into all the exercises and duties which his community enjoined. More than this, he soon outstripped in ardour his maturer associates, and would not rest until he had established morning prayer-meetings amongst them; drawing them from their homes and beds at five o'clock, to begin the labours of the day with public praise and intercession. He accepted the leadership of a class; and thereby, young as he was, became the official adviser of many an older Christian than himself. Everywhere he was seen admonishing sinners and exhorting believers. He would often venture to call upon persons with whom he had no intimacy whatever, and after inquiring affectionately about their religious attainments, permission to pray with them was asked, and if granted, earnestly improved. Another step, of a still more decided character, he was urged to take; and that was soon, but hesitatingly, done—he became a local preacher.* It was an interesting moment for him when he first appeared before a congregation, and attempted the duties, which, in his estimation, were the noblest a mortal can perform in this world. Few men ever entertained severer views of the awful responsibilities of the ministerial office than himself. Even in after-life, he trembled greatly as he mounted to the pulpit. To the last he was oppressed and agitated by the solemnity of the position. But now, when he first essayed to preach, although the priestly character was but partially assumed, and the circumstances under which he appeared were altogether

* The local preachers may be considered as the militia of the Wesleyan ministry. Their services are generally confined to the circuit to which they belong, or to a certain sphere of labour. To this useful and zealous body of men religion has been highly indebted; and in no respect did Mr. Wesley exhibit greater sagacity than in the levy of a corps of lay auxiliaries.

humble, he could not but feel that his undertaking was one fraught with unspeakable significance. There he stood, for the time, as the ambassador of Deity. The petty interests of this world vanished from view, and the momentous realities of being spread themselves before him in grand or terrible array. Around both preacher and hearers there was an eternity rolling. Heaven was above them, with all its rich promises and unfading pleasures; Hell beneath them, with all its terrors and hopeless torments. On the one hand was the Prince of Evil, toiling with indomitable malignity to entrap and destroy those deathless spirits; on the other, was the Prince of Peace, lifted up on the cross in eloquent agony, that he might draw all men unto himself. There was a time coming when each individual then present must stand face to face with the Great Judge, and encounter the lightning glance in which the fate of an eternity should be disclosed. This awful meeting could not be avoided by any. Of all events in the soul's history it was to be most tremendous. It was the event therefore which the preacher singled out as the theme of his first sermon—"Prepare to meet thy God!" Perhaps the whole of his hearers have long ago passed through that thrilling ordeal; himself also; but whether the discourse then delivered was remembered before the great tribunal with pleasure by each, or recalled by some with shame and remorse, is an interesting question which the books of judgment alone can explain. From the same text, however, he still may be said to preach; it is inscribed on his tomb, where many a brief posthumous discourse has been delivered in all the unrivalled oratory of the grave.—William pursued his work as a local preacher with all the ardour and intrepidity which the period required. It was an age of Methodistic persecution. He had to brave much opposition: he must needs suffer tribulation, as the pioneers of every creed, good and bad, are compelled to do; he was required to encounter much personal danger in the performance of his duties. The very appellation "methodist" was then, of itself, a provocative to insult. Yet, as if enamoured of such holy perils, he lifted up his voice, not only in Preston and the adjacent villages, but travelled far beyond his prescribed sphere of labour. Personal fatigue was wholly disregarded; he journeyed great distances on foot to deliver his sermons; and where walking was impracticable, he would engage a horse at his own expense. Twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty miles, it is said, were sometimes traversed in this manner, and three, or perhaps four, discourses preached as the duty of a single Sabbath. On one occasion, when he had

been to officiate at some distance from Preston, and was returning thither to finish the labours of the day with an evening sermon, his horse fell, and hurled its rider to the ground with great violence; he was stunned by the shock, and lay stretched on the road for some time, almost bereft of consciousness. Not many minutes after his arrival in Preston, he was found preaching as if nothing had occurred. Although seriously injured by this accident, he had pushed onwards to his appointed place, resolved to perform the service of the evening, whatever might be the result. An illness ensued, medical aid was required on the following day, and some time elapsed before health was fully restored.

In this humble but arduous capacity of a lay preacher he continued to labour for a considerable period. Often did he inquire whether the noble purposes of preaching were answered in him—was he winning souls? The answer was not unfavorable. With intense delight he observed that his ministry, rustic as it was in its scope, frequently produced its fruits. And no wonder that it did so. The startling energy of his address, the plain but pointed appeals which he made to the consciences of sinners, the nervous concentrated style he adopted—but, above all, the solemn inspiration which seemed to accompany his preaching and to stimulate his rebukes, as much as it dignified his entreaties—could not fail to arrest the attention of an auditory, and to produce emotions of no light or transitory character. The people heard and wept, trembled, or triumphed, as the preacher spoke, and the spirit operated. Many were the dull ears pierced by those penetrating appeals—many the cold hearts roused into flame by his ardent and impassioned exhortations. Amongst those who owed their religious impulses to his preaching—so far as human services avail—was Miss Ann Cutler, of Ribchester, near Preston; a woman whose extraordinary piety and still more extraordinary exertions, afterwards secured for her considerable celebrity amongst the Methodists of the period, under the homely but honorable *sobriquet* of “Praying Nanny.”* Another of his

* Ann Cutler possesses some interest in connexion with Mr. Bramwell, not only as a convert in the first instance, and a coadjutor afterwards, but also as the subject of a pamphlet-biography published by the latter. Few women perhaps have ever been more devoted to prayer. She could do little else. With her it seems to have been an ungovernable impulse. Discarding the usual restraints imposed upon her sex, she “exercised in public,” and that in a manner too energetic to conciliate the good opinion of many, who thought it highly indecorous for a female to pray in public at all. She possessed, however, great abilities for the work, uncommon fluency, and often produced remarkable effects. She acted as a kind of non-commissioned itinerant amongst the Methodists, travelling occasionally from circuit to circuit, and doing much damage to the enemy during her progresses. “Very often,” says her biographer, “ten or twenty, or more, were saved in one meeting. Wherever she went there was an amazing power of God attending her prayers.”

converts was a young lady in Preston, Miss Byrom, who was destined to become his wife, before many months had elapsed. Such, indeed, was the success of his labours, that his fellow-members regarded him as divinely qualified for the more important office of a regular minister. To that office he felt himself strongly impelled; nothing appeared to him so honorable as the exclusive devotion of life to the promulgation of the Gospel. His own wishes, his grave temperament, his increasing piety, the numerous conversions which occurred in connexion with his prayers and sermons, and the earnest advice of his Christian friends, all urged him to the pulpit. But these were not guides of sufficient authority. Did the Spirit of God distinctly summon him to the holy office and empower him to discharge its sacred functions? To his scrupulous mind, the question was fraught with peculiar difficulty. From the very first, he had tremblingly continued to discuss the subject of a divine call, and to distress himself with doubts respecting the authenticity of his license to perform the occasional duties of a local preacher. To relieve his embarrassment, he had applied himself incessantly to prayer; but his fervent supplication seemed to elicit no decisive response from the Divine oracle. His, too, was the prayer of agony—prayer of such intensity, that it affected the body as well as the mind. He would sometimes spend a large portion of the night, struggling for guidance, until the perspiration dropped from his brow. On one occasion he retired to Preston-Moor, and concealing himself in a large sand-hole, passed many hours—it is said no less than six and thirty—together, “in prayer to the Lord, that he might know his will.” And now, when urged to devote his life to preaching, and to adopt the holy calling as his exclusive profession, the anguish of his soul became truly excessive. The struggle between his scruples and his inclinations was fearful, and kept him for a considerable period in a state of excruciating suspense. Four years had elapsed since the completion of his apprenticeship, and though he might have readily established himself in business during that interval, he was too much perplexed with respect to his future destination to decide between the counter and the pulpit. And if the singular absorption of all his energies in the work of the ministry (as will be seen in the following pages) be duly considered, the question which held him so long in a state of fearful uncertainty will be regarded as one involving (for such a mind) the most startling extremes. Was his business to be for earth or heaven? Was he to spend his days in the pursuits of commerce, or in the service of the

sanctuary; trading in earthly commodities, or dealing with immortal souls; heaping up the beggarly dross which perisheth, even with the using, or gathering precious jewels to set in the Redeemer's crown for ever?

Those persons who are in the habit of ascribing most Christian conflicts to satanic influence might detect in these perplexities the desperate efforts of the Prince of Evil to prevent, or at least postpone, an event by which he was to suffer, and his kingdom to be materially weakened. And truly, if the Destroyer foresaw all the consequences which were to result from the consecration of this youth to the work of the ministry, he might well avail himself of his darkest agencies to frustrate a step so detrimental to his interests. Here was to be no careless carpet-warrior, wearing the uniform of the church militant yet carrying the sword of the spirit in its scabbard, but a bold champion of the cross, in whose hands that sword was always to be seen flashing; and by whose inspired prowess thousands of hearts were to be pierced and subdued. Such a doughty crusader as this was to be stopped, if possible! Whatever might be his talents, it was clear that he possessed a strange tact—of all others the most hateful in the eyes of the apostate chief—that of winning souls to Christ. Many of the rebel host had already been lured back by him to the standard of the cross: many more would certainly follow, if the young warrior should swear eternal hostility to the powers of darkness, and devote himself entirely to the work of Christian conquest. But how far the fierce struggles which impeded his path to the pulpit were due to this source, it is impossible to say. Probably it was the design of Providence

“To exercise him in the wilderness,
Where he should first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare.”

and thus prepare him for his high functions by long experience in the severe but profitable school of doubt and suspense, of trial and temptation.

At one time, however, a circumstance occurred which appeared likely to terminate his perplexity, and to draw him decisively into the career of a regular preacher. The Liverpool circuit was in want of an additional minister, and Mr. Wesley appointed Mr. Bramwell to fill the post until the ensuing conference. Here, thought he, was an authoritative invitation to the pulpit as a profession, and a sign from heaven respecting him. To Liverpool accordingly he went, greatly to

the grief of his parents, who, as yet unreconciled to his abandonment of the Church of England, now considered him lost to the true faith for ever. But his sojourn there was short. The Wesleyan Society at Preston soon discovered that it had lost a zealous and efficient auxiliary, and the withdrawal of his services was the more acutely felt, as the interests of religion were rapidly extending in that district, and the demand for labourers was consequently increased. An urgent request was therefore forwarded to Mr. Wesley that the Liverpool appointment might be rescinded, with which he immediately complied, and in a few days the Preston Methodists were delighted to receive back an esteemed coadjutor, whose apparent loss they had deeply deplored.

This counter-change in his prospects and the claim for his settlement at Preston, he began to consider as decisive of his future career. He concluded that it was the will of heaven he should now adopt a secular vocation, and confine his spiritual labours to the humbler duties of a member of the society and an occasional preacher. He therefore made his arrangements at once, took a house and shop, and commenced business. His prospects as a tradesman were flattering—success appeared certain. His integrity was known almost to a local proverb; his friends were numerous; his parents, gratified by his abandonment of the ministerial profession, regarded him with more complacency; his fellow Methodists viewed him with peculiar esteem, as a man marked out for great usefulness amongst them; his influence as a lay preacher was fully recognised by others, modestly confessed by himself. The position he was thus called to occupy—the hopes he might reasonably entertain, were such as a moderate ambition might well deem satisfactory. It is impossible to doubt that mental energies like those he possessed, in combination with high moral principle, would ultimately have secured him an enviable position in society, not only in point of affluence, but also in general respect and esteem. Add also to these favorable circumstances, another—not the least interesting in connexion with his future happiness—an attachment which he had formed for the young lady previously mentioned, Miss Byrom, who was a relative of the poet Dr. Byrom.* Con-

* John Byrom was a M.A.; Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; F.R.S.; inventor of a system of Short-hand; and a poet of some celebrity. After completing his university education, he declined entering into holy orders, and went to Italy to study physic and health. He abandoned the medical profession however, and on his return to England became a teacher of the stenographic system he had himself devised. He was styled "grand master" of that minute art. His circumstances had been straitened by a precipitate marriage, but in time an accession of fortune rendered him independent, and he then devoted himself to study and literary recreation. His productions are chiefly remarkable for homely vigour

templating all these circumstances therefore, as indications of the Divine pleasure respecting him, he entered the path of commerce anew: the intended minister became to all appearance a settled man of business.

Was it really Satan that had diverted a successful opponent from the enterprise to which he seemed already committed, and withdrawn him from the position in which his spiritual weapons might have been plied with most effect? Or was it one of those paradoxes of Providence, in which we see mortals led to reverse their steps, and to turn their backs upon the destiny the Almighty has called them to fulfil? After years of doubt and perplexity respecting the choice of a career, terminating, we have seen, in his actual appointment to and acceptance of the pastoral office, another change was made before he had well commenced his ministerial duties; and the preacher was straightway converted into a tradesman.

Scarcely, however, had he established himself in Preston, when he received a letter from Dr. Coke, who had been deeply grieved by this recent change, urging him to abandon such a mode of life, and devote himself to the ministry without reserve. Other letters from the same source followed, in which this advice was still more warmly enforced. Their effect was to reopen a question which he thought had been closed for ever. He was again plunged into doubt and perplexity, and must pass through the fire anew, before his composure could be regained. To surrender his pleasant worldly prospects, and sacrifice the property already invested in his business, was in itself a task which would require some determination; but this was not the difficulty. Was he to infer from a further and still more careful consideration of all the circumstances which affected him, and which embodied, as he might suppose, the wishes of Providence, written in a kind of obscure and mystical cipher, that his proper place was the pulpit, and his appointed occu-

and nervous quaintness, combined occasionally with much wit and genuine humour. A vein of true poetry is to be found in some of his pieces. His 'Colin and Phoebe,' a pastoral, written whilst he was a student exhibits considerable talent. His 'Hymn to Jesus' printed (with some variations) as No. 285 in Wesley's collection is a devout and beautiful composition. Some of his humorous productions—such as 'The Three Black Crows,' and 'Lancashire Dialogues'—are tolerably famous. Byron, however, was unfortunate in possessing that "fatal facility" in the art of rhyming, which is the poet's most dangerous endowment. This enticed him into the unprofitable practice of versifying metaphysical, theological, and other controversial subjects. We have a '*critique* on Dr. Middleton's examination of Bishop Sherlock's work on Prophecy,' in *heroic* verse of 1000 lines! Of course the attempt to extract the true poetical essence out of such refractory topics as 'thoughts on the origin of evil'—on 'human reason'—on 'spurious and superficial writers' was perfectly hopeless: a man might as well expect to turn a mathematical demonstration into a lyric, or a turnpike act into an epic poem. Had he chosen better themes in general, and concentrated his resources with greater care, Byron might have taken high rank amongst the tuneful brotherhood.

pation, the ministry? This was the problem mooted. This was the problem discussed in tears and with tremblings. The advice of friends was earnestly sought; special light from heaven was importunately implored. For some time the mental conflict continued, but it did not remain so long undecided as before. At last, the tumult in his thoughts began to subside; impressions consolidated into convictions; convictions were matured into resolutions; and resolutions in turn were speedily followed by energetic performances. He satisfied himself that he had a Divine commission to preach the Gospel, to consecrate his life exclusively to that sublime employment—and therefore prepared, without loss of time, to renew his labours as a professional minister. Business was renounced; his stock and effects were sold at a considerable sacrifice; his secular concerns adjusted; his family and neighbourhood for the present forsaken. One winter's morning Mr. Bramwell left Preston, mounted on a horse which he had purchased for the journey, and carrying all the baggage he considered necessary in a pair of saddle-bags. He proceeded southwards—he was on his way to the Kent circuit, to which Dr. Coke had invited him so earnestly. As he travelled the intervening 250 miles, he had time for many thoughts and many prayers respecting the future. Behind him, he had left friends, home, business, and comparative ease; before him was the world, with its strange faces, cold hearts, and perverse ways. There was a sacred calling, indeed, to pursue; but it was one which promised him toil, poverty, and privation. It was a calling which demanded inflexible resolve, stern self-denial, and heroic energy for its successful prosecution. Those were the days when Methodism sent forth a genuine chivalry—when its bold adventurers roamed the kingdom in search of spiritual captives, and penetrated into the gloomiest recesses of spiritual night. Fearlessly they broke into haunted ground, where the shapes of evil were most numerous, and the arch-deceiver had spread his enchantments most profusely. There was work enough for them to do! The demon of bigotry was still rampant; almost every step was contested by the myrmidons of persecution. There were giants and genii to be encountered—powers of darkness to be resisted—unclean spirits to be ejected. The strongholds of error must be stormed, the spells of the great magician dissolved, and the poor victims of Satan's sorceries set free. In his expeditions, the knight-errant of the cross must often assail more hideous monsters than those of the days of romance. He had to meet the enemy as a “roaring

lion" seeking to devour him—as a "wolf" scattering the sheep—as the "old serpent" deceiving the people that he might destroy—as the "great dragon" breathing out fire and slaughter. St. Georges were wanted in every village. Trim, tinselled warriors, who looked well at a spectacle, or tilted dexterously at a gay tournament, were not the men for the work! Those who had stout hearts and strong heads—hands of iron and swords of well-tempered steel—who could brave all the dangers of an adventurous life—who shrank from no peril and feared no opposition—who would have charged up to the very gates of hell itself, had it been necessary—were the heroes required!

That solitary traveller, now commencing in good earnest a life of Christian errantry—was he such a one?

He was one of the bravest!





CHAPTER II.

The Knight's Equipment—Arrival in Kent and Proceedings there—Prayer Scenes—Preaching at an Execution—A Dream Revelation—Successes and Doubts—Returns to Preston—Marriage—Misunderstanding with Mr. Wesley—Interruption in his Ministry—Appointed to the Blackburn Circuit, 1787—Persecution, Human and Canine—Privations—Colne Circuit, 1789—Work and Wages—His Parent's Salvation—Dewsbury Circuit, 1791—Civil War and Recipe for its Cure—Spiritual Rain-making, and Showers of Blessing—Mr. Nelson's Prophetic Dream and Double Interpretation—Birstal Circuit, 1793—Revival there—Anecdotes—Spiritual Clairvoyance.

His sword was in his hand,
* * * * *
Ready that moment at command
Through rock and steel to smite.

It was a two-edged blade,
Of heavenly temper keen;
And double were the wounds it made,
Where'er it glanced between;
'Twas death to sin—'twas life
To all that mourn'd their sin;
It kindled and it silenced strife,
Made war and peace within.

J. MONTGOMERY.



HIS was in 1785. The same year was marked by the death of Mr. Fletcher, whose elevated piety and truly apostolical character have embalmed his memory in the church. The mantle of this Elijah may perhaps be said to have fallen on our young Elisha.* Although differing in many respects, and particularly in point of literary endowments, they agreed in the fundamental qualifications for the "work of an evangelist." The ardent zeal, profound sanctity, intense earnestness, unbounded philanthropy, and complete absorption in the duties of the sacred calling which distinguished the vicar of Madely, were conspicuously exhibited by the youthful itinerant of Kent. If one burning and shining light had just been quenched, another was already kindled to occupy the vacant candlestick. If John Fletcher's commission was recalled by him who issued it, may we not suppose that

* In the minutes of the Wesleyan Conference, held at Bristol in July 1786, the following questions and answers appear:—Q. Who are admitted on trial? A. William Bramwell, [&c. &c.]—Q. Who have died this year? A. John Fletcher, a pattern of all holiness scarce to be paralleled in a century, [&c.]

it was only recalled to alter the name and to substitute that of William Bramwell?

Be this as it may, the latter had prepared himself by long watching and severe discipline for the assumption of the knightly character. Like the neophytes of ancient chivalry, he had kept a dreary vigil preparatory to his inauguration. But now he had put on the whole armour of God; he wore the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, and the helmet of salvation; in one hand he held the shield of faith, and with the other grasped the trusty and trenchant sword of the Spirit. He had nothing dainty in device, or showy in equipment; but if you could have seen his mail when it was doffed after some three and thirty years of constant use—the helmet all bruised and dented, yet still unbroken—the shield scarred with the fiery darts of the wicked, yet unpierced—the breastplate dimpled with a thousand blows, but strong as ever—the sword notched and worn, but unruined—(and they are now hung up in the armoury of God)—you would have discovered that in temper and material they were of heaven's best workmanship. But that mail would not have been complete, without adding to faith and righteousness the crowning defence of "entire sanctification." For this he had long been seeking, and fortunately found it some little time before he set out on his journeyings. The manner he thus described: "I was for some time deeply convinced of my need of purity, and sought it carefully with tears, entreaties, and sacrifice; thinking nothing too much to give up, nothing too much to do or suffer, if I might but attain this pearl of great price. Yet I found it not; nor knew the reason why, till the Lord showed me I had erred in the way of seeking it. I did not seek it by faith alone, but, as it were, by the works of the law. Being now convinced of my error, I sought the blessing by faith only. Still it tarried a little, but I waited for it in the way of faith. When in the house of a friend at Liverpool, whither I had gone to settle some temporal affairs, previously to my going out to travel, while I was sitting, as it might be, on this chair" (pointing to the chair on which he sat), "with my mind engaged in various meditations concerning my present affairs and future prospects, my heart now and then lifted up to God, but not particularly about this blessing, heaven came down to earth; it came to my soul. The Lord, for whom I had waited, came suddenly to the temple of my heart; and I had an immediate evidence that this was the blessing I had for some time been seeking. My soul was then all wonder, love, and praise."

In this, as in all other instances, I have proved the devil to be a liar,—he suggested to me a few minutes after I received the blessing, that I should not hold it long—it was too great to be retained,—and that I had better not profess it. I walked fifteen miles that night to a place where I had an appointment to preach; and at every step I trod, the temptation was repeated, ‘Do not profess sanctification, for you will lose it.’ But in preaching that night, the temptation was removed, and my soul was again filled with glory and with God.”

Thus equipped, he sallied forth—

“A goodly knight all armed in harness meet,
That from his head no place appeared to his feet.”

Arrived in Kent, Mr. Bramwell immediately entered upon his work with all the energy he could command. A man of a devout spirit and fervid temperament, was particularly needed for the circuit at this crisis. The Wesleyan Society there had been reduced to a state of great religious debility, in consequence of some dissensions which had recently occurred. The able and zealous services of the Rev. George Shadforth had already contributed much to revive the languid spirituality of the members; but a breach in the church is ever made more easily than it is mended. The new comer entered into Mr. Shadforth’s plans with great eagerness; they preached—prayed—exhorted; and a beneficial change soon ensued. The people speedily discovered that their youthful minister was not a man of common piety, nor his pulpit abilities of an inferior order. They were struck with the earnestness of his manner and the solemnity of his discourses. His character won their respect, and his simple but dignified bearing placed him in a position which few so young could have been expected to command. But it was in the exercise of prayer that he was deemed most remarkable. This, his peculiar gift, was developed at that early period of his ministry with extraordinary power; and from the results which accrued, many persons were disposed to impute even a kind of supernatural efficacy to his petitions. On one occasion, whilst employed in supplication at a meeting, it appeared to the assembly as if the Spirit had descended upon them like a flash of lightning streaming into the apartment: all present were strangely moved, and to one penitent heart the visitation was said to have carried the evidences of Divine forgiveness. At other times they would fancy that the glory of God filled the room during his addresses to heaven, and that (as they asserted, and no doubt believed) “the boards even *trembled* beneath

them!" But whatever might be the illusions of the people, one fact was certain—that the holy influence was frequently, if not generally, present in answer to his prayers; and if these extraordinary manifestations existed only in imagination, the Divine power was often exhibited in its sublimest reality; not in playing upon the senses, or overwhelming the intellect; but in changing and renewing the polluted heart. In this marvellous process, commenced or concluded as it was at some of these meetings, a far greater wonder was performed, than in filling the room with light, or rousing the boards into sympathetic agitation.

Many of the converts were young in years as well as in grace, and Mr. Bramwell therefore adopted a system of exhortation more expressly designed for their benefit. He detained them after the evening service, the females one Sunday, those of the other sex on the following Sabbath. Thus the novices in religion were faithfully and minutely counselled by one, who, perhaps, young as themselves, was yet the spiritual parent of many in Christ. The plan was productive of excellent results. At these and similar meetings, he would sometimes make particular individuals the subjects of united intercession. The name was announced, and all present were requested to combine in an application to heaven on behalf of one whose circumstances perhaps demanded especial attention. Even after an ordinary prayer meeting had terminated, he would request the people to remain, that they might bring all their supplications to a focus in favour of some one "yet unblest."

There were times, however, when this great spiritual lever by which man moves, not earth alone, but heaven also, was totally powerless in his hands. An instance of this may be related. A pious man with whom he had some acquaintance, was married to a drunken woman. The latter had been frequently in great peril during sickness, and Mr. Bramwell had interceded for her with such effect, it was believed, that on more than one occasion she was restored to health in answer to his prayers. A relapse occurred: the advocate was again summoned to her room. He came in haste, and knelt with the husband by the side of her bed: he strove to pray as usual, but found he could not! Some mysterious influence chained his tongue, and forbad the prayer! The thought that, after so many petitions had been successfully presented and heaven's indulgence always abused, there remained no "place for repentance," forced itself upon the mind of the horror-stricken pastor. He continued for some minutes in a state of ominous

silence, and then rose from his knees in great anguish, exclaiming, "I can pray no more! The Lord will not answer! She will now die!" The sad augury was true: in a few hours her spirit was ushered into the presence of its Maker, unshriven, and to all appearance unpardoned.

In those times (as we have said) evangelical preaching had its dangers, and Mr. Bramwell was frequently in personal peril. A little spiritual quixotism once induced him and another young preacher to visit Maidstone on the day appointed for a public execution. Seven criminals—all youthful—were to be despatched. The object of the two ministers was to address the crowd on the solemn event. Mr. Bramwell accordingly mounted a large stone, and began a discourse, but the people were by no means prepared for such a supplement to such a spectacle. A shout was raised,—“Knock the fellow down! kill him!” And knocked down he certainly would have been, perhaps killed, had not some gentleman, whose name he never learnt, rode up to the furious mob, and entreated them to let him alone, and listen to his discourse. This timely interposition calmed the tumult, and secured the preacher a patient hearing. Whether good was done or not is unknown, but he had certainly chosen a season as unfavorable for the communication of religious impressions as an ancient gladiatorial show, or a modern Spanish bull-fight.

From another peril he was rescued in a more mysterious manner; that is, by a “dream-revelation.” One night he dreamt that in passing along a certain road, he was assailed by some ruffians who were posted in ambush for the purpose of killing him. A few days afterwards he had occasion to take that very road¹; but recollecting his dream, and thinking that Providence had probably meant it as a friendly warning, he determined to proceed by another route. It was well he did so. Some miscreants, it was afterwards discovered, were lying in wait with a design to rob or maltreat him, at the very time when he would have traversed his ordinary path, had he not been deterred by this singular admonition.*

* Mr. Bramwell was by no means disposed to deny the occasional virtue of dreams. He seems to have met with some stubborn illustrations in his own experience. After his death, a book was found amongst his papers, bearing an inscription on the back which intimated that it had served as a record of “some of his remarkable dreams.” This inscription had been carefully mutilated, though it still remained just legible: but unfortunately the interior of the book was gone, except a few blank leaves. He had doubtless destroyed the narrative himself, under the impression that it would never have been credited. The subject of prophetic somnolency indeed is yet too piquant for calm philosophical discussion. People believe or disbelieve just as their humour dictates. Some strain at a gnat; others swallow a camel. When we remember, however, that there is so much mystery attached to the subtler operations of the mind—so little known with regard to the superior influences which act upon it—nay, that the soul itself in its true capacities is so complete a problem as yet, it would be most unphilosophical to conclude that things which are extraordinary according

Mr. Bramwell continued in the Kent circuit until the conference of 1787. During his sojourn there, he had won the esteem of the society, and contributed not only to the increase of its members, but also to the amelioration of its spiritual condition. Many a wandering sheep had been tracked by the indefatigable pastor, and conducted back to the fold of Christ; many a serf of Satan had been freed from bondage by his instrumentality, and ushered into true liberty and life. There was pleasure for him in this fact—pleasure deep, noble, apostolical: but still it was pleasure frequently chequered and severely chastened. His former perplexities as to the propriety of his course often returned: at times he felt himself sorely tempted to abandon his work. His position was even more embarrassing than before: on the one hand, humility constrained him to question his competence for the office of minister; on the other, actual success seemed to point him out as a man destined to play an important part in the great crusade against sin. In one of his moods of despondency, Mr. Bramwell resorted to an experienced acquaintance for advice, from whom he obtained a very simple recipe, available in every case of mental depression. “Go into thy closet—lock thyself up, and there review thy life. If thou canst find that God has blessed thee with a single mercy, *praise him for it.*” The patient tried the process, and found that its merits had not been over-estimated.—A very cheap but efficacious catholicon!

In July, 1787, he returned to Preston. The star which guided him on this journey was Miss Byrom, and his object now was to complete the arrangements which had been made for their union. The attachment between them was unabated by time and distance. Before his departure for the Kent circuit, he had stipulated with Dr. Coke that Mr. Wesley’s consent should be procured, and presuming that this had been fully accorded, the marriage took place shortly after his arrival in Preston. The lady he had selected was one of whom he might well be proud. She was beloved by all who knew her; yet not more beloved than respected. To the charms of a graceful person and captivating demeanour, which had rendered her “the admired” of Preston, were added the more enduring attractions of a sweet disposition and a refined

to our common notions, are necessarily or probably untrue. The probability is quite the other way. There are myriads of mysteries yet to be unfolded. Our knowledge is like our planet itself—a mere pin’s point in the immensity of the universe.—With respect to “dreams and visions of the night,” it is clear that these were *once* an authentic channel of communication between heaven and earth. But we leave to each reader to decide whether such a privilege may have obtained in the era of George the Third as it did in the days of King Saul; or have been vouchsafed to a Wesleyan preacher, as well as to a Jewish priest.

sensibility. A similarity of religious views—attendance upon the same religious ordinances—and connexion with same religious associates, contributed to cement their attachment. Miss Byrom's bosom companion was Miss Crane (subsequently the first wife of the Rev. Charles Atmore), and the sister of Mr. Bramwell's most intimate friend, Roger Crane. Miss Crane met in our young preacher's class, and it was she who first introduced Miss Byrom to the humble meetings which the Preston Methodists were accustomed to hold for the purpose of worship in that day "of small and feeble things."

The marriage, however, occasioned a temporary interruption of his ministry, and might have again changed his career. At the Conference for 1787, he was assigned to the Lynn circuit, but finding that he could not conveniently remove to any distance from Preston at this period, he apprized Mr. Wesley of his position, and consequent inability to fulfil such an appointment. Whether the latter was offended at the marriage, on the ground that it had not been contracted with all due regard to the established discipline, or whether he was simply indisposed to make any alteration in his arrangements, it may be difficult to decide; but he refused to open a nearer circuit for Mr. Bramwell, although strongly solicited to do so by several influential preachers. The name "William Bramwell," was, therefore, retained on the lists in connexion with Lynn, but the owner continued at Preston.

This interruption of his regular ministerial labours was matter of deep regret. Yet, determined that the untoward event should not chill his zeal for religion, however much it might cramp his services as a Wesleyan, he employed himself with undiminished ardour in the more contracted sphere of operations now available. His suspension continued for some months:—months of much doubt and anxiety with respect to his future prospects and his spiritual pursuits. The question he had so often debated seemed to be again laid open for harassing discussion. To one who regarded all the incidents of life as dramatic developments of the Divine purpose, the circumstance might readily have assumed the appearance of *another* providential hint—a hint that he ought once more to withdraw from the sacred profession! Had he felt any disinclination to the work, or had his zeal suffered any abatement, the period of uncertainty which ensued would have proved extremely critical. The temptations to a comfortable worldly life had been greatly increased by his recent marriage, for in that way only, he could hope to secure the domestic bliss which must otherwise be largely sacrificed in pursuing

the duties of the ministry. The interests and happiness of a wife were also to be considered, and he could not fail to perceive that these were not likely to be promoted by exposing her to all the hardships and discomforts of a wandering life. But he had no misgiving on the ground either of personal or relative inconvenience. The question was simply—"what is the will of God?" Let him but know *that*, and no matter what the consequences might be, he would abide by the decision to the end!

At length his uncertainty was brought to a conclusion. A vacancy occurred in the Blackburn circuit, to which Preston then belonged, in consequence of the death of the Rev. Edward Burbeck,* who had been summoned thither from Scotland. Intelligence of the fact was of course conveyed to Mr. Wesley, and another minister requested in his place. Who so proper as Mr. Bramwell? It was the neighbourhood where he wished, and where his circumstances compelled him, to remain for a time—where he was well known, and his preaching already appreciated. It was indeed the only circuit in which he could exercise his regular functions with due regard to his temporal and family concerns at that period. When, therefore, he received an invitation from Mr. Wesley to accept the office intended for Mr. Burbeck,—and this was immediately sent,—he viewed the whole transaction as a final announcement of God's will concerning him. A few circumstances, distant and unconnected as many may think, often shape themselves into Divine logic, which admits neither of reply nor resistance when addressed to the devout. Mr. Bramwell must, by this time, have begun to doubt the accuracy of the interpretations which he had given to previous

* Some very mysterious particulars have been related respecting the fate of Mr. Burbeck and a brother minister, the Rev. J. Keighley. The following is an extract from a letter inserted in the 'Methodist Magazine' for March 1818:—

"The Bristol Conference for 1786 appointed Messrs. Joshua Keighley and Edward Burbeck to labour in the Inverness circuit. They met at Aberdeen, and set off for that circuit together; when approaching within two miles of Keith, on the high hill which overlooks it, in the dusk of the evening, about sunset, they beheld, about twenty yards from them, a dark shade like a screen drawn right across the road. They took courage and rode up to it, which divided and opened like a two-leaf gate; and as they passed through it, an audible voice said, 'You may pass on to your circuit, but shall never return to England.' This prediction was actually accomplished, in the death of these two holy men of God in the course of the year. They slept at Keith that night, and next noon arrived at Elgin, where I then lived: I called at their lodgings, found Mr. Keighley reading, and Mr. Burbeck had gone to bed, having rested none the preceding night, owing to the thoughts of the vision and the voice. Mr. Keighley then told me solemnly and seriously what I have related above. They continued to fulfil the duties of their ministry until the end of July, about the time of the sitting of Conference, when Mr. Keighley was seized with a brain fever, and died on the eighth day. Mr. Burbeck came four days after from Inverness, and lodged with me, until he received his appointment from Conference, which was for the Blackburn circuit. He seemed anxious to get out of our circuit, that he might defeat the prediction. In pursuing his journey to Keith he was taken ill, four miles before he reached that village, and was carried thither sick of a fever, and died on the ninth day."

incidents, seeing that they pointed to contrary results. But now he thought he had surely obtained a key to the cipher in which the purposes of heaven were written. In the details of the transaction which led to his appointment to this circuit, there was something he deemed so critical—perhaps so extraordinary—that he accepted them at once as an authoritative injunction to go forward with his ministry.

He entered immediately upon his duties in the Blackburn circuit, and from that time to the hour when he was translated to a “station” above, he pursued the vocation of a true Christian apostle.

This appointment gave great satisfaction to the Blackburn society. Mr. Bramwell displayed all the zeal he had exhibited in the south. The duties he had to perform demanded no small amount of energy and enthusiasm. The promulgation of the Gospel in that locality was a difficult and sometimes perilous task for a Wesleyan preacher, instead of being, as it now is, a peaceful and unresisted enterprise: persecution was ever on the alert; and occasionally resorted to strange instruments and methods of annoyance. In one part of the circuit, Mr. Bramwell was frequently assailed by bull-dogs. Several of these animals were kept in a tan-yard which he had to pass. The workmen there thought it a pleasant, and perhaps a meritorious act, to let them loose upon the schismatic preacher. He suffered accordingly: his limbs were sometimes severely lacerated; and though he carried a large stick shod with iron, on purpose to repel such attacks, he could not escape many a dangerous wound. So great indeed were the injuries he thus endured, that throughout life he retained an unconquerable dislike to dogs, and always encountered them with extreme caution. The pointed staff is still preserved as a relic of bygone days of persecution.

The appointment to this circuit, although deemed so fortunate, had compelled him to live at Blackburn, whilst Mrs. Bramwell was obliged, in consequence of family affairs, to remain at Preston. This was an arrangement which could not but prove unpalatable to a pair so recently united. Yet his conjugal feelings were not permitted to interfere with his ministerial duties. A monthly visit to Preston was all the domestic indulgence those duties would allow. Attached as he was to the noble-minded woman whom he had chosen as his wife, and doubly interested in a home by the birth of a son, he cheerfully sacrificed all the comforts of his own hearth to carry out the engagements of his calling. Thus his zeal in the cause to which he had devoted himself, was not

only tested by difficulties and opposition, but proved by the readiness with which he relinquished the tenderest intimacies of life for distant and transient intercourse.

After more than a year spent in the Blackburn circuit, Mr. Bramwell was removed (1789) to another station in the same county—Colne. It was at the time a Wesleyan parish of very formidable dimensions, even for a primitive itinerant. To some of the places within this circuit, he had to travel no less than thirty miles. His head-quarters were at Southfield, near Colne. There, again, he had a residence, which he only visited at intervals; a home to which he was almost a stranger; and a wife and child whom he saw still more rarely than before. Out of every six weeks, he could spend no more than a single evening by his own fireside. Whilst he himself was wandering from place to place in this extensive circuit, and partaking largely of the varied discomforts to which an humble soldier of Christ was then exposed, he was compelled to leave his wife—now removed from her friends and native place—at Southfield, in a state which seemed more akin to widowhood than wedlock; and a first-born child who enjoyed almost as little of a father's care at this period, as if he had been an orphan. The slender stipend, too, attached to his office, was inadequate to supply the necessities of a family, and at the same time to support the prodigal expenditure in which benevolence prompted him to indulge. In fact, his wants became so urgent, that he was compelled to trench, not only upon his own private property, but also upon his wife's, for charitable funds. But in return for this self-denial and for all these exertions, he was receiving the recompense he most coveted—he had souls for his hire. His wages were paid in converts. He saw that his work was accepted of God: the spiritual grain which he had sowed, produced by Divine favour a plenteous harvest, and this was more than enough for one who thought it far greater glory to win a single soul than to subdue a whole empire.

There was one person, however, whose salvation gave him greater satisfaction than that of any other, although he was not directly, perhaps, the instrument of conversion. This was his mother. Hundreds of prayers he had presented for her as well as for his other parent. Their perfect redemption was an object too dear to be neglected by one who could weep over the peril of any stranger. Would not God answer him for *them* if He had done so for others? The time was now come when this would be proved as regards his mother, for he had received a summons to her death-bed. He went

over to Preston immediately, and found her anxiously engaged in seeking for a full manifestation of God's pardoning grace. Whilst he knelt by her bed, praying fervently, that grace was vouchsafed: she burst into a rapturous exclamation, "I see the Lord Jesus and his angels waiting to receive me!" and soon afterwards terminated her life in hope and triumph.—A few years later, William was sent for to witness the death of his father. The meeting was affectionate: a change had passed over the spirit of the bigot: sects and churches were then of little moment—he was gazing on the mystic future, and had done with bigotry for ever. "I once thought you were all wrong," said he to his son, "but I now see that you were right." He too died in full assurance, and thus the young preacher saw both his parents depart for the Better Land.

After two years' labour in Colne, he was transferred to Dewsbury. The change was in some respects extremely distressing. He entered upon a circuit where "active religion" was then a rarity; where the Wesleyan society itself had been recently shattered by some internal commotions. A great number of the members had withdrawn: the trustees of the chapel had refused to settle it upon the plan prescribed by the conference; and as Mr. Wesley would not permit the preachers in his connexion to officiate there, the dissentients installed a minister of their own. The consequences were such as ordinarily ensue when the mere appendages of religion become the topics of contention; the essentials are neglected, endangered, and sometimes wholly abandoned. When zeal is found clamouring in the porch or out-premises of a system, the inner shrine is generally sure to be deserted. In such cases the hostile parties doubtless fight to keep the Evil One out of the church; but they fight *each other*; and so zealously too, that the enemy finds easy access to the sacred precincts, and steals the most valuable vessels of the sanctuary, without fear of molestation. In the present instance, the choicest treasures of the temple had almost disappeared when the disappointed preacher came to the rescue. 'Active religion,' said he, in his laconic language, 'scarcely appeared. I could not find a person who experienced sanctification, and but few who were clear in pardon.*' This was a lamentable state of things for a man whose practical insight into religion scarcely suffered him to dwell on its outward adjustments; whose glance always darted through the accessories of a system to the very nucleus of its vitality; and who saw in Wesleyanism especially nothing

* The passages marked by single inverted commas in the subsequent part of this work, are principally Mr. Bramwell's own observations as extracted from his letters.

more than a powerful and holy apparatus by which souls might be benefited and Christianity extended. He had something else to do in this world than mingle in a party feud. Sternly therefore he refused to interfere in these unhappy disputes. But he saw that the exasperation then prevalent must be appeased—if possible extinguished. How—was the question? Not by external appliances, but by internal remedies, was the answer. A ‘revival of religion’ was his specific. If the piety of the distempered community could be recruited, its disorder would soon vanish, and the disputes might then settle themselves. To ensure this revival, therefore, became his great object; and the engine employed was, of course, prayer. He began himself, and pleaded in private with the utmost importunity. For some time no reply was vouchsafed; no symptoms of the expected ‘rain’ appeared. From day to day, he went up, like the messenger of Elijah, to the top of his spiritual Carmel, and looked towards the sea for the cloud which was to bring the blessing—but “there was nothing.” Months rolled away—there was no token of a change. A year passed—a year which he described as one of ‘hard labour and much grief;’ and still there was no sound of coming rain. The horizon was yet as cloudless and unpromising as before! But he persisted in his supplications: a prophetic faith sustained and stimulated his pious exertions. He strove to enlist the people themselves in this holy struggle with heaven. Prayer-meetings were established in the morning, and at the early hour of five o’clock, many met to aid him in petitioning for the desired Pentecost. An able coadjutor also was found in a pious female then visiting the neighbourhood, Ann Cutler, of whom mention has already been made. Well did she vindicate her title to the appellation of “Praying Nanny.” By four o’clock in the morning this enthusiastic creature would rise, and plead with all her energy on behalf of the parched and desolate circuit. In another apartment not far distant, the deep earnest tones of the young preacher’s voice might at the same moment be heard in an ‘agony’ of intercession for the same blessing. Sleep there could be none for those who were within earshot of these clamorous suitors, when the spirit of supplication was strong. Was heaven proof against such incessant appeals? Not for ever! At length it seemed to answer and say—‘go again and look towards the sea.’ The preacher went; and now saw in the horizon he had so often and so anxiously scanned for the first faint tracery of the cloud which was in God’s time to discharge its fertilizing streams upon the thirsty land, a speck of promise

—distant but decisive! ‘As I was praying,’ said he, ‘I received an answer from God in a particular way, and had the revival discovered to me in its manner and effects.’ In a moment his fears and anxieties were dissipated: the rain was at hand, and the skies would soon pour down righteousness! ‘I had no more doubt. All my grief was gone; I could say, the Lord will come: I know he will come, and that suddenly.’—Exultingly he waited, as the heavens grew darker, and the cloud approached and expanded, for the earliest drops of the shower. ‘Nothing appeared very particular,’ said he, ‘until under Nanny Cutler’s prayer one person received a clean heart.’ That was the beginning!—‘We were confident the Lord would do the same for others,’—the cloud was large and full of promise!—Next, ‘at a prayer meeting two found peace with God: and, in that week two more received the same blessing.’ The drops were now descending!—‘On the Sunday morning, we had a love-feast for the bands, when several were much concerned for sanctification. One young woman received the blessing. On the Monday evening the bands met. A remarkable spirit of prayer was given to the people: four persons received sanctification, and some were left in distress. Several who were the most prejudiced, were suddenly struck, and in agonies groaned for deliverance. On the Thursday, one who had, for a fortnight, been exceedingly pained for purity of heart, was delivered. The work continued almost in every meeting, and sixty persons in and about Dewsbury obtained sanctification, and walked in that liberty.’—They were now in the midst of the glorious rain! A hundred souls were gathered to the society during this single quarter; and those already enrolled amongst its members partook largely of the blessing. The cloud spread itself over the whole circuit, and people flocked from the neighbouring districts to partake of its refreshing influences. They crowded to the love-feasts held in the favored locality: ‘numbers there found pardon and some perfect love. They went home and declared what God had done for them.’

Great was the joy of the young minister, when that barren circuit which had been to him like a spiritual desert was thus watered with showers of righteousness, and began to blossom as the rose. With exquisite satisfaction, he beheld the restoration and enlargement of a society, in which previously he could not ‘find a person who had experienced sanctification, and but few who were clear in pardon.’ And when he thought on his own instrumentality in this good work, was it not manifest that the Almighty had honored

him in an extraordinary manner, by unstopping the sluices of heaven, and sending a mighty rain upon the land? Yet of personal merit as attached to this event, he never dreamt. To him the whole occurrence was a simple exhibition of Divine power, and the predominant sentiment on his part, one of gratitude for the notice which God had taken of his wishes and labours. To a stranger—a mere spectator—the process might seem to savour of religious conjuration, and the supplicants to resemble a party of African rain-makers. The ground thirsts for water: the magicians come forth to perform their invocations; there is no natural promise of rain—not a cloud in the sky: for a time all appears to be useless; the desert remains desert as before. But still they persist: the heavens are at length overcast; rich masses of vapour darken the whole vault; and soon a deluge of righteousness is poured upon the panting earth! *These sorcerers can make rain!*

His second year in the Dewsbury circuit was therefore one of great success. Publicly and privately he laboured incessantly for his master. The amount of physical exertion he could sustain at this period, may be best illustrated by the following statement of the Rev. John Kershaw, who spent six months under his roof during the year 1792-3. “I once accompanied Mr. Bramwell from Dewsbury to Wakefield, in the afternoon, for the purpose of assisting the Rev. Richard Reece, in holding a watch-night. Mr. B. preached. We continued the service as usual on those occasions until the new year was ushered in. After taking some refreshment, we rode home, six miles; the parish clock striking one a.m. as we passed along the street. It was more than two o’clock when we retired to rest. The next morning (Sabbath), he was in his closet at half-past four o’clock—near his usual hour—pouring out strong cries and tears to God. We breakfasted at our accustomed time, seven o’clock. He walked about two miles or two miles and a half to preach at nine; and afterwards renewed the tickets of a pretty large class. From that place he walked about three miles further; dined, preached, met two or three classes, and preached again. Afterwards he travelled upwards of two miles more on foot, and preached a fourth sermon. This done, he returned home, walking five miles back. He then sat down to supper, ate his meat with gladness and singleness of heart, and with cheerfulness also. Having finished his repast, he rose from his seat, exclaiming, ‘Brother Kershaw, I could do it all over again.

I am almost as fresh as I was in the morning!' The next day he was in his closet at his usual hour—four o'clock."

He gave also particular attention to the humbler duties of the ministry, and went from house to house to rebuke or console as occasion might require. He thus won golden opinions from those who had no connexion with his own society, and drew them to the places where he preached. The many respectable individuals who resorted to his powerful ministry, in spite of their repugnance to the sect, fully attested his great popularity.

But his rise to eminence was still more curiously denoted by a dream, which occurred to his intimate friend, the Rev. John Nelson. Whilst the latter was slumbering one night, he imagined that he saw before him a ladder of enormous length reared perpendicularly; its foot rested on the earth, but its summit was wholly unsupported. How it stood was a problem. He could discern no angels ascending or descending, as Jacob did in his vision; but, on looking up to the top, he could detect one figure; it was Mr. Bramwell, standing erect on the uppermost step! The dreamer awoke, and was greatly disquieted for his friend. There was an evil omen in that dream, he thought! It betokened eminence indeed, but eminence of a perilous kind. He therefore lost no time in communicating the circumstance to the party concerned, together with his own interpretation thereof. A word of caution was not forgotten: "you had mounted as high as you could get on that ladder,—therefore, beware!" "True," was the reply of Mr. Bramwell, who dexterously extracted a more favorable augury from the circumstance, "*but did you see me fall?*"

In 1793, Mr. Bramwell was called away from Dewsbury, and stationed at Birstal. He left a revival behind him in the former circuit: he found one prepared for him in the latter. Of course, it received an additional impulse from the presence of a man whose business and pleasure were equally combined in the work of conversion. In this circuit, however, there were difficulties at first to overcome; the movement did not meet with general approbation amongst the members and officials of that part of the Wesleyan Society. Even Mr. Bramwell's associate in the ministry, it is said, eyed it with extreme suspicion, whilst the leaders of the classes in a great measure shared his sentiments, or succumbed to his prejudices.* But fortunately for the new minister, the opposition or distrust of

* Sigston's Life of Mr. Bramwell, 4th edit. p. 46.

the other was speedily withdrawn. A love-feast* was held in Birstal chapel on Christmas-day, which proved a great spiritual victory, no less than fifty sinners having laid down their arms, and surrendered themselves to the Lord of Hosts. The same ancient and omnipotent influence, which in apostolical days had pierced its thousands to the heart, under a single sermon, was here recognised in the conversion of these fifty. The scruples of the leaders gave way before such evidences of Divine patronage. From that time they too lent themselves to the work, and mightily did it prosper under their hearty co-operation. At the following love-feast, on Easter Sunday, fifty more of Satan's followers came over in a troop to the banners of the Messiah. The Birstal circuit was soon in a state of great commotion. Mr. Bramwell was regarded as the presiding genius of this auspicious movement. Wherever he went, the angel that "troubled the waters" seemed to accompany him, and to produce such a healing excitement, that whosoever plunged boldly in was made whole. When his warning voice was raised, it was raised in power, and, whether in cottage or in chapel, in prayer or in preaching, it pierced to the heart, and left there a solemn echo, which none could readily suppress. The ordinary services were not enough for an extraordinary occasion. The sermon and its attendant proceedings were often but a prelude to a less formal, but far more effective, intercession with heaven: it was at the prayer meetings which followed, that the peculiar energy of the revivalist was most strikingly displayed. These were sometimes continued until nearly midnight. Similar meetings took place at various private houses, under his direction, and largely fed the flame which was glowing throughout the circuit. The fame of this great work travelled into other quarters, and many came from a distance to observe it more narrowly. Various were the opinions it excited. Some, who were prompted by mere curiosity in their visit, were suddenly seized by the same influence which had prostrated others, and returned home, not to tell of the follies they had witnessed, but of the reformation they had undergone. It was no rare thing for a scoffing spectator to carry

* "Love-feasts" in the Wesleyan economy are meetings of the members of the society, and other persons who obtain a "note of admittance," at which any individual who may feel disposed, is at liberty to state his "experience," or give such brief details respecting his religious history as he may think interesting or instructive. They are so called, in imitation of the "feasts of charity" (*ἀγαπαί*), which were in use amongst the early Christians until prohibited in the fourth century. The word "feast," however, has relation only to the soul: a little bread and water is the only aliment provided for the body, and this more as a matter of form, commemorative of the breaking of bread in sign of Christian fellowship, than of essence.

back with him a regenerate heart. Even a listener at the door has been known to yield to the spell of these occasions, and tremblingly entering the place, has laid down his heavy load of guilt, and left with no other burden than the light one of Christ.

The result of all this religious activity exceeded the expectations of most ; and the change produced in the societies was sufficient to astonish both pastors and people. "While Mr. Bramwell continued with us," said a veteran member, Mr. Thomas Pearson, senior, of Gomersal, who is but recently dead, "the work went on progressively ; and there was such an alteration throughout the circuit as was never before witnessed." When he left them, after two years' sojourn, the number of members had been doubled, and many others had attached themselves to the Wesleyan worship, either as hearers or avowed disciples.

Many extraordinary incidents illustrative of Mr. Bramwell's singular success in prayer occurred in this district. One is related by Mr. Thomas Jackson, a local preacher in the Dewsbury circuit : Whilst Mr. Bramwell was at his (Mr. Jackson's) house on one occasion, an individual came to request that the former would visit a gentleman who was apparently on the eve of death. The summons was pressing : the sick man was in peril of his soul ; no preparation had been made by him for the mysterious transition. But strange to say, the man of prayer would not move ! Regardless of the entreaties of the messenger, as well as of Mr. Jackson's, he sat silent for some minutes, lost to all appearance in painful meditation. At length, however, he rose ; but instead of repairing to the house where the sufferer lay, he fell on his knees, and requested his companions to join him in prayer. His petition was fervent, and faith soon appeared to triumph over all uncertainty. "Lord," said he, at last, "we believe thou *wilt save* the person about whom we have been talking." God did so : in a few days afterwards it was ascertained that the patient had "passed from death to life," instead of the dreaded contrary.

The same individual who relates the above, was himself benefited on another occasion by the prayers of Mr. Bramwell, although in reference to a matter of business only. Travelling through Birstal on his way to the Leeds market, Mr. Jackson called at the house of his ministerial friend. He told the latter of the anxieties under which he then laboured, owing to a serious depression in trade, which had prevented him from selling any of his goods for several weeks.

Mr. Bramwell listened with great concern—he could only devise one method for obtaining relief; but that he had often tried with success, and it was immediately adopted for the present emergency. “Thomas,” said he, “let us *pray*.” They knelt together. An impassioned petition winged its way upward. His hopes, his confidence, appeared to be unbounded. “He spoke,” says Mr. Jackson, “in faith, as if it had been actually revealed to him that my help was at hand. I set off from his house, and pursued my journey to Leeds, endeavouring all the way to believe what the man of God had uttered in prayer.” Was he then disappointed? No; God heard at Birstal—answered at Leeds: there, the Almighty ear listened—here, the Almighty hand operated. “I had not been more than a quarter of an hour at my stand in the cloth-hall, before a merchant, with whom I had never before traded, came up to me and purchased all the goods which I had on hand.” The relief was most seasonable, and the grateful tradesman was encouraged by this striking circumstance to confide for the future in that Providence which could so easily allay all his anxieties.

A stranger anecdote still is told upon the same authority. It might almost indicate a species of spiritual clairvoyance, for which, indeed, many persons were disposed to give Mr. Bramwell credit. One day when he was at Mr. Jackson’s house, a female with whom the latter was well acquainted, came in. Mr. Bramwell fixed his gaze upon her, and said sternly, “Woman, you are a hypocrite! If you don’t repent, and become converted, hell will be your everlasting portion!” This sudden and energetic denunciation—plain enough, in all conscience—astounded the female. Mr. Jackson was himself startled, perhaps somewhat shocked—for this very person he considered to be one whose piety was unexceptionable; her religious character stood high, and for many years she had been a blameless member of the methodist society. The woman left the house, however, with an agitated mind. That evening she sent for Mr. Jackson to pray with her. He found her in great spiritual anguish, and learnt from her own lips that she had really fallen from her high estate, and had been living for some time in darkness and spiritual destitution. The rebuke she received in the morning fell upon her like a thunderbolt, and awakened the deepest remorse. Prayer was made for her; the detected “hypocrite” was transformed into a sincere penitent, and ultimately into a decided believer. Often did she declare in subsequent life, that “if she had

died in the state of mind in which Mr. Bramwell saw her, she must have been eternally lost."

A similar instance of seeming divination has been related by the Rev. J. Stones, a brother minister. Whilst the latter was once visiting the sick, in company with Mr. Bramwell, they had occasion to pass a public-house, out of which a man was issuing at the time. "The Lord have mercy on that man," said Mr. Bramwell to his companion; "do you know who he is?" "Yes, sir," replied Mr. Stones; "do you?" "No," was the answer; "but this I know, that he is a thorough infidel." "Dear Mr. Bramwell," said the other, "do not say so." "But I am sure of it," was the rejoinder; "he is a perfect infidel!" And such indeed proved to be the fact. The man was at that very time known to Mr. Stones as one of the most profane and atheistical individuals in the neighbourhood. How the seer acquired his insight, or upon what grounds he affirmed his conviction of the man's infidelity, he might perhaps himself have found it difficult to explain; but this incident is one of many in which he undoubtedly exhibited a most acute faculty of discernment, and a faculty so extraordinary in its character, that it was altogether incomprehensible to those who witnessed its exercise.*

* On this subject, see Chap. VII, and Appendix.





CHAPTER III.

Appointment to Sheffield, 1795—Expected Millennial Reign—Spiritual Victories—Pilgrimage for Clean Hearts—Dissensions, and Mr. Kilham's Division—Chapel Scenes—Conversion of Deists—Conversion of the World practicable?—Mr. Longden's Testimony—Effect of Mr. Bramwell's Labours upon a Colleague—Nottingham Circuit, 1798—Prayer for a Chapel-site—Visit to Sheffield—Compiles the 'Salvation Preacher'—His own Progress—Extraordinary Covenant Meeting—Distress and Death—Prayers against Napoleon and M. A. Taylor—Mr. Clarke's Cure—Mr. Greensmith's Restoration to Sight—A Silent Meeting—Curious Incident.

As to outward dispensations, if we may so call them, we have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences and appearances of the Lord. His presence hath been amongst us, and by the light of his countenance we have prevailed. We are sure the good-will of Him who dwelt in the bush has shined upon us.

CROMWELL'S LETTERS.



IN 1795, Mr. Bramwell's first ministry in the Birstal circuit terminated. He had now to leave a society to which he had made such important contributions; but it was with the delightful hope that many whom he had been instrumental in leading to the fold, would remain there under the eye of the shepherd.

In this he was not wholly disappointed. On his return to the circuit many years subsequently, although he found it generally in a languishing condition, yet he also discovered that many babes in Christ had become strong men, tyros had changed into teachers, and unpractised scholars ripened into experienced professors.

The Conference of 1795 instructed him to proceed to Sheffield. The people of that circuit were extremely desirous of securing the services of a zealous minister. The religious movement which, at the period in question, disclosed itself in several parts of the Wesleyan community, was operating with considerable vigour there. During the year preceding his appointment, nearly 400 members had been added to the rolls of the church. Indeed, the work had been so extraordinary, that one reverend gentleman, in a letter to Dr. Coke, expressed a conviction of a most flattering character. The revival here and throughout Yorkshire, he thought "must

surely be a prelude of that most glorious conquest of grace which we are prophetically assured shall take place in the last days; and hence was eminently preparing for the *grand millennial reign*.* Some individual, therefore, who could sustain the holy excitement with unabated force, was anxiously sought: some one who could, if possible, stimulate and extend it, was yet more desirable. The hopes of the people were not frustrated. Conference gave them a pastor of whom they knew nothing by person, but something by report. They were to receive a preacher, who, young as he might be, was already experienced in the stirring business of a revival. In the Dewsbury circuit, he and a few ardent spirits like himself, had prayed open—so to speak—the windows of heaven, and left a spiritual desert blooming with spiritual verdure. In the Birstal circuit he had lent his whole strength to a work partially commenced, and promoted it so zealously, that on his removal, the society there had expanded to twice its former dimensions. In Sheffield he was now wanted to play a prominent part in the “millennial” overture, and to surpass his former exertions in the cause of revivalism.

On his first introduction, however, to the circuit, he felt considerable disappointment with respect to its religious prosperity. In the country places he could not discover the ardent or decided piety he had hoped to find, and in Sheffield itself there appeared to be at the moment few evidences of the great religious commotion which had so recently occurred. But he soon perceived that there was an influence of no ordinary kind at work in the circuit; the same, in fact, which he had left in full operation at Birstal and Dewsbury. In a short time he could announce “a revival in most places, and in some of them a great one.” He found large congregations in almost every chapel and meeting-house. In December, he observes to Mr. Sigston, ‘when I first came here, I wrote to you against the circuit, because I saw no work of sanctification, but I am now astonished at the rapidity of this work in many places.’ The people were not long left in uncertainty as to the qualifications of their new minister for his difficult office. They found him to be an ambassador, accredited by the obvious inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that inspiration attested by the abundant conversion of souls. Almost every night when he preached, ‘there was a shaking amongst the people.’ The chapels were particularly crowded, and sometimes hun-

* Letter from the Rev. John Moon to Dr. Coke, Meth. Mag., vol. xviii, p. 427.

dreds were unable to find entrance. One evening, said he,* 'there was a general outpouring of the Spirit. We desired all in distress to come into the vestry, when eight souls were delivered from the bondage of sin. Eight more received pardon on the Sunday. Monday was our love-feast, and near the close of it, the power of God came upon us. We concluded at the usual time, but begged of all in distress to stay, and before eight o'clock, it appeared to many good men that more than twenty souls were delivered from guilt: the work has gone forward every day since, more or less. I have had clear evidence, and, to speak within bounds, I am persuaded of more than a hundred persons having found liberty in three weeks.' Indeed, says an observer, "Mr. Bramwell was no sooner heard, than the genuine power was experienced: a kind of electric sensation was felt by the whole society." Another—Mr. Longden—announces that "wherever he went, visible signs and wonders were wrought in the name of Christ; and in the course of his first year [in Sheffield,] 1250 members were added to the society!" This was a noble reinforcement, and the more satisfactory, because it surpassed the expectations of those who had been the most sanguine in their calculations under the inspiration of the splendid increment of the previous year—an increment less, however, than one third of the present!

The fame of his piety and the force of his preaching drew people to him, both at home and from a distance. He could scarcely go out to tea or dinner without encountering persons who had come purposely to meet him, under the hope that their transient intercourse with the holy man might relieve their spiritual difficulties, or lead perhaps to their complete salvation. And many were they who went to partake of a homely meal in company with him, and before they left, found that they were eating the bread of life—the manna sent down from heaven! During such interviews, souls often received the salvation they had long been seeking. A rare spectacle it must have been! All the gay badinage of the social hour hushed in the solemn discourses, of which the soul and its eternity were the themes! The table was an altar; the talk, a sermon or a prayer; the company, a congregation; and the repast, a little revival!

From other circuits, and from great distances also, individuals sometimes came to hear his preaching or obtain his counsel. Even ministers, both lay and professional, are said

* Letter to Rev. George Marsden.

to have travelled more than fifty miles, in order to enjoy personal communion with one so highly acknowledged of heaven, and particularly to seek the gift of 'entire sanctification,' of which doctrine he was then, as ever, the unwearied advocate. At a band-meeting one evening, in Norfolk-street chapel, at which Mr. Bramwell was present, four strangers were observed by the Rev. (then Mr.) W. E. Miller: they appeared to be greatly agitated whilst listening to the accounts which were given by various individuals in connexion with this important subject. On accosting one of them, Mr. Miller learned, with no small surprise, that this person was a regular preacher, the Rev. George Smith, then stationed at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, who had made a pilgrimage to Sheffield, with three companions, for the purpose of obtaining "clean hearts." The distance was upwards of seventy miles; not too great a journey, certainly, for such an object, if it could only be thus ensured. They had heard that many had found peculiar virtue in the 'water of life,' drawn from the 'wells of salvation' at Sheffield—a virtue which not only cleansed the soul from the guilt of sin, but sanctified it from all impurities; and thither they repaired, like invalids to some medicinal spring, in the fond hope of proving its efficacy to the utmost in their own persons. When the meeting learned who were the strangers, and the purpose for which they came, common supplication was made on their behalf. The Spirit answered. Mr. Smith found what he sought, and then joined in prayer for his companions; nor did the company retire until the four pilgrims had received the grace of purity, and could carry back with them the "clean hearts" they had travelled so far to obtain.

The incredulous, also, as well as many who questioned the utility of these extraordinary spiritual agitations, visited the circuit from various parts of the country, and personally investigated their striking phenomena. But here, as at Birstal and Dewsbury, as also in every other place where the true power was manifested, many a stout unbeliever was overwhelmed by the very influences he had doubted or derided. They gazed upon a spectacle which, at first, they thought was produced by priestly jugglery or popular fanaticism; but they continued to look, and lo! the signs and assurances of Divine power displayed themselves with indisputable authority; that power fastened upon their own hearts, and they themselves became living proofs of its sovereign prowess.

Much of the good done during this revival in Sheffield was attributed to Mr. Bramwell's pointed and energetic discourses, —more perhaps to his unwearied system of prayer. Had it

not been for the unfortunate dissensions which ensued, it is probable that the interests of religion in this circuit would have progressed with greater rapidity than the society had ever previously experienced: but almost every step was contested. Independently of the ordinary opposition which a revival has to encounter, Mr. Bramwell was compelled to mourn over what he deemed the hostility of some of his brethren (not his immediate colleagues), who could not take the same view of the movement as himself. This opposition was peculiarly painful, because, in the natural order of things, it was least of all to be expected, and, in its pernicious effects, the most fatal: in his own language, it was 'to cause destruction on every side.' But what rendered their hostility still more sinister, and gave it a sting of inexpressible acuteness, was the belief that some of the individuals who strove to check these religious operations were by no means ignorant of their value and authenticity. 'We know we are of God,' says Mr. Bramwell, 'and many of our opposing brethren *know* the same, but they want the grace of submission. Oh, Lord! hasten that time!'^{*} It is no wonder then that he learned to dread an association with preachers whom he might consider adverse to the spirit and system of revivals. In reference to his appointment at the next Conference, the only wish he expressed was, that he might 'be put down somewhere with those who live in the revival.'

There was another source of grief. During his stay in Sheffield, the society was convulsed with the controversy to which Mr. Kilham's name is attached. Whatever might be the merits of that dispute, piety suffered as of course. The members were not only divided in opinion, but alienated in spirit. A vast fund of energy, which might, under proper application, have christianized a whole tribe of savages, was expended in angry dispute. The Sheffield circuit presented a strange spectacle. In the midst of a revival, it was suffering from a rupture. Here, some were added; there, others seceded. In one part of the field were heard the cries of

^{*} We would fain hope that Mr. Bramwell was mistaken in his impressions on this subject, and that the error was produced by construing some manifestations of dislike to the accidents or accompaniments of a revival, into hostility to its essential principles. At all events, this unpleasant topic would not have been introduced into the present volume, however minutely connected with his Sheffield career, had it not been for the extraordinary charges so unaccountably advanced against him by Mr. Benson's biographer, and, still more recently and wantonly, by Mr. Atmore's. For a more particular notice, the reader is referred to the Appendix. It is enough at present to say, that a minister, whose zeal for the promotion of religion and the work of conversion (whether just or extravagant) was so great, that the apathy of some of his brethren afflicted him most acutely, has been attacked as a disturber of the peace of the Wesleyan community, and a kindler of the fires of sectarian contention!

penitents and the thanksgivings of converts ; in another, the clamour of contention and the hateful revelry of a sectarian revolution. The Spirit of God was dominant here ; the passions of man were paramount there. And as angels rejoicingly led their repentant charges through the door into the fold, the demons of controversy enticed or expelled their victims from the sacred inclosure through the capacious breach which had been made in its walls. One thousand persons withdrew from the society ;* how many—old or new Methodists—from the church of Christ in consequence, is only known to heaven.

What share would Mr. Bramwell take in this ecclesiastical affray ? Many were curious to discover, and some were anxious to engage him on behalf of one party or the other. Not a few were vexed that he should not have publicly adopted the principles they supported. He was not, however, to be thus enlisted, but carefully eschewed everything like a public or formal participation in the affair. ‘ I live,’ says he, in a letter to Dr. Taft, ‘ *above* the division, and wait the event in peace. The will of God be done—not mine. When all are humbled, we, I trust, shall shake hands, and all give glory to God.’ He was far too much absorbed in his work,

“ As a messenger of grace to guilty men,”

to undertake any prominent part in a sectarian battle, where souls were more likely to be lost than won !

But though he resolutely avoided all party interference in the controversy, he did whatever lay in his power as a Christian minister to soften, and, if possible, suppress the exasperation it had produced. Many of his brethren, of course, lent him their assistance in calming these unhappy contentions, and their united efforts did much to alleviate the mischief the society had sustained. The revival continued to advance : very frequently a peculiar influence was developed, which some have described as wholly unaccountable, and, in their judgment, decidedly supernatural. They often sat in what the Apostle picturesquely designates “ heavenly places ;” they were carried out of this lower region, and raised to an altitude, from which there appeared but one step to Paradise. Mr. Parker, of Woodhouse Grove, who represents himself as an eye- and ear-witness of those glorious seasons, which he thought would remain imprinted on his recollection to the latest period of his existence, says, “ Many beside myself will

* Mr. Longden’s Life.

never forget the day, when that hymn was sung at Garden-street Chapel, which begins with

‘Angels now are hovering o’er us,
Unperceived they mix the throng,’ &c.

For if ever I was conscious, as far as a human spirit can be, of the presence of supernatural powers, that was the time. Many felt and possessed unutterable things. It seemed that there was but a thin veil between us and the invisible world, and that Satan, for a season, was bound in chains, and the church militant admitted into the presence-chamber of the Majesty on high. The strongholds of Satan fell, like Dagon before the ark. Many were pressing through the strait gate into that kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And it was as though angels themselves attended to write the names of believers in the Lamb’s book of life. But whether angels were there or not, of one thing I am persuaded, that heaven was there.”

Of another occasion, the Rev. James Wood, a colleague for the year 1797-8, gives the following account: “On the first day in the new year 1798, the members of the society met to renew their covenant with God. From the commencement of the service, a holy awe appeared to rest upon all present; and while the directions for renewing our covenant-engagements were read, deep seriousness and fixed attention were evinced by the whole congregation. When we had ended the reading of the directions, the people were urged to pause, to consider the importance of the subject, and to pray for strength of grace, that they might be enabled to vow unto the Lord, and then to perform their vows. A proper space of time was given for this purpose, that all might sit in silence before the Lord, and breathe out their desires to him. During this silence, the power of the Lord was generally felt, and Mr. Bramwell was so filled with the holy influence as to break forth into the following exclamation: ‘Glory, glory, glory be to God! He is coming!’ The whole assembly felt the overwhelming power of Divine grace. I afterwards heard of seven persons who found peace with God, during the time we sat in silent meditation and prayer, and many others afterwards. Such a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, I had scarcely ever known in a large congregation. This was not a transient visit, but an abiding blessing; it was not a superficial touch, but a gracious stamp of the moral image of God upon many precious souls. Some of those persons who were then present, are still [after Mr. Bramwell’s

death] living, and will recollect the season with holy gratitude to the God of all grace. It was, indeed, a faint emblem of the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured on the disciples of Christ in Jerusalem. It proved that it was effected, not by human might or power, but by the spirit of the Lord."

Another instance is related in the journal of Mr. Longden:—"July 3, 1798.—This quarterly meeting of the preachers far exceeded every other that any preacher present ever witnessed in a fullness of love and glorious power. Mr. Wood wished to speak his experience, but could not, he was so much affected. Mr. Bramwell was so dissolved and overpowered, that he could not pray; and Mr. Pipe shouted 'Glory, glory, glory to God in the highest!' All the local preachers (two excepted) had a clear evidence of sanctification; and these two received the blessing before we parted."*

Mr. Bramwell himself relates another remarkable case, in a letter. 'Last Sunday noon [May, 1798] I saw the spirit working, in some degree, as on the day of Pentecost. At night, a great Deist was struck as with lightning, and roared out among the people, in the greatest agony, for about twenty minutes. All around him were in tears, and the Lord Jesus saved him from his sins. The man then said, "I will proclaim it—I will write it with my right hand, that Jesus is the Son of God!"—Seven more struggled into liberty.'

A similar incident is recorded in a letter of Mr. Longden's:—"At a morning prayer-meeting in Norfolk-street chapel, Mr. Bramwell discovered a man with a 'hard heart.' He begged that all present would unite in prayer that this 'hard heart' might be softened. This was done: the man himself soon began to cry for mercy, and in such a way as surprised the meeting. It was not in vain. He soon rose from his knees, and, in the fullness of his joy, told the people that he had been a professed Deist; but having dreamed the preceding night that if he came to the chapel at five o'clock he should receive some great benefit, he was there to claim it. He now knew what had been meant. His heart of stone had been transmuted into one of flesh."

Mr. Bramwell remained in the Sheffield circuit for the extreme period allowed by Wesleyan discipline. His three years were well spent. During this time 1500 members had been annexed to the society, and it need scarcely be said that much of this success was attributed—so far as human agency

* Mr. Longden's Life, p. 145, (1st. edit.)

is implied—to his prayers and preaching. The practical and comprehensive character of the doctrines he enforced, and the stimulating influence which he everywhere exercised, rendered his progress a kind of spiritual triumph. You could trace the footsteps of William Bramwell by the penitents, converts, and sanctified believers he left behind him. Like some stalwart warrior of old, whose track along the battle-plain was marked by heaps of the fallen, this stout soldier of Christ plunged headlong into the ranks of Satan, and left wherever he went some striking trophies of his prowess. His sword was truly two-edged; and fitted for every kind of work. Was the sinner to be pierced? He preached repentance. Was the penitent to be dealt with? He urged present salvation—immediate justification. Had he to grapple with the indolent or lukewarm believer? He modulated his strokes so as not to wound but rouse; he would not let him rest until he had seen his need of the gift of ‘complete sanctification.’ His sermons therefore were for every class, and the indefatigable energy with which he enforced these—his three cardinal doctrines—produced an effect that astonished observers, and tended greatly to the augmentation of the church of Christ.

Yet it is interesting to note the modest estimate which he formed of these successes, and the unappeasable longing he manifested for more conversions. ‘The work is going on,’ he observes in one of his letters; ‘many have been lately brought to God, both rich and poor:’—for which he devoutly gives all the glory to God. ‘But,’ he continues, ‘we want a *greater* breaking-out through the circuit.’ Even this would not suffice:—‘I am constantly reasoning within myself respecting the conversion of the *world*.’—Most singular it may seem for an humble minister of Christ to be busying himself about the conversion of the world, and talking of it as an event quite possible at no distant period;—that too, in a measure, through human agency! There must be considerable difference between the ‘little cloud’ which waters a limited district, and the deluge of righteousness which shall cover the whole earth, and drown every monument of iniquity! But if such expectations were immoderate, let it be remembered that they were the expectations of an individual who had already witnessed many splendid proofs of the power of prayer in these matters, and who thought it not irrational to conclude that if his own personal exertions, on which he set so light a value, had been honoured with such success, there could be no limits assigned to the combined efforts of the Christian

community at large. If he could have got all hands to fly to prayer, and every soul to join in a grand onset (as he writes), what would become of Satan's kingdom? Would not its walls fall crashing to the ground, and the hosts of Christendom march exultingly over its ruins?

In the autumn of 1798, Mr. Bramwell took his farewell of the Sheffield circuit, leaving behind him a goodly number of living testimonies to the efficacy of his labours. How he had borne himself during the three years he spent there may be best ascertained from the statement of the revered Mr. Henry Longden—of whom more hereafter. "I was much struck with his manner and spirit," writes the latter. "I never witnessed in any other man such burning love to God and man, and such unwearied diligence in preaching, praying, and exhorting, and visiting from house to house. I had the happiness of obtaining his confidence and friendship, from which I have gained more knowledge than from all other men." The effect produced upon one of his colleagues by Mr. Bramwell's conduct and labours, is also striking and impressive. The Rev. Henry Taylor, (the individual in question,) being in the Nottingham circuit on a particular occasion, the late Mr. Thomas Tatham was invited, with some other of the Nottingham friends, to meet him. "On entering the room," says this latter gentleman, "I beheld Mr. Taylor as if absorbed in pensive thought, with an expression of holy joy and mingled grief depicted upon his countenance. . . . He related in detail his own experience; how God had spoiled him of his own wisdom, and shown him the necessity of becoming a little child daily for the sake of Christ. He then informed us, that formerly he used to set a high value upon his own gifts and attainments as a preacher, and considered himself superior in talent to most of his fellows; but since he had laboured with Mr. Bramwell, he had become deeply humbled, and ashamed that ever he had entertained such high thoughts concerning himself. For, said he, 'in holding love-feasts, and visiting the classes throughout the circuit, I heard many persons in almost every place praising God for the blessings they had received under Mr. Bramwell's preaching, while I did not hear an individual assert that he had profited under my ministry. I saw God had in effect set at nought my wisdom, and cast me aside as a useless instrument, by refusing to work with me. Under these humiliating views, I was filled with deep sorrow and compunction of soul; and besought the Lord to *reconvert* me, and make me a little child. It was not long before my prayer was answered

according to my request. After which the Lord was pleased to crown my labours with abundant success in the conversion of sinners.' Some few years before this I had heard Mr. Taylor preach in the open air at Leeds, with great authority and courage, like a son of thunder. At Mr. Hall's (the house where they were), he manifested a diffidence, meekness, and self-abasement, in striking contrast."* Honorable as this statement is to Mr. Bramwell, it does equal credit to the sincere piety and genuine humility of Mr. Taylor himself.

Mr. Bramwell's steps were now directed to Nottingham, which had been chosen as his next circuit by the Conference. What was its state? was the first question for him. Was religion flourishing—were the societies peaceful? Above all, was there a revival in prospect, or in progress? Alas! these were inquiries which, at the moment, scarcely admitted of more than a melancholy negative. Nottingham had suffered severely from the controversial spirit which ravaged the Methodist community at that stormy period. Many of the members had forsaken the parent body, and enrolled themselves under Mr. Kilham's banners: of course, the bitter feelings engendered on both sides produced their customary immediate effects—a deterioration of piety in the one party as well as in the other. The large chapel in the town was in the hands of the new association, and the parent society was consequently compelled to avail itself of private dwellings, and even of barns, for the purposes of public worship. There was abundant discouragement here for the young minister; but there were other circumstances which he deemed of a still more afflictive character. Everywhere he found proofs of spiritual infirmity, even amongst those who remained faithful to the old constitution: no signs of the work of sanctification gladdened his eye: he could discover 'very few who knew anything' about this important grace. He earnestly prayed a female friend, Miss Barrett, † who he thought had received an extraordinary call to preach, to come and cast her 'net into this deep sea of iniquity, and bring to land a few souls for

* Rev. S. Dunn's Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Tatham, p. 62.

† Mr. Bramwell, it will be seen, was guilty of abetting a female in—what many would consider a delinquency in her sex—preaching the Gospel, and admonishing in public. The principle on which he acted, was the same as that professed by Mr. Wesley in reference to his own lay ministers. When Mrs. Fletcher requested the opinion of the latter on the subject of feminine services, he told her, that they were right where there was "an extraordinary call," which, he added, "I am persuaded has every one of our lay preachers." Abstractedly speaking, there could be no reason for doubting the power of the Almighty to inspire individuals belonging to one sex as well as to the other. Practically—it was a question to be determined by facts and results. If there were obviously a peculiar talent or inspiration, and the grand design of preaching was accomplished in the conversion of souls, these men of realities were by no means disposed to sacrifice a

His glory.' But he knew that it was his work to rekindle the piety of the people: he was there for the very purpose of reanimating the circuit. Without hesitation, but with much humility, he applied himself to this difficult task. As a primary condition of success, he carefully discountenanced all allusion to, or interference with, the topics of contention. For the more active part of his work, the same mighty engines were employed as at Sheffield and elsewhere. He gave himself to continual prayer: he preached, wrestled, exhorted, visited, and laboured with all his ability. Heaven honoured his exertions. He soon had the satisfaction of 'seeing the Lord work:' souls were 'awakened and saved nearly every day.' With rapture he discovered decided tokens that the 'Lord would come,' notwithstanding the disordered condition of the circuit. On this subject, he says, 'several of his dear brethren were more determined than ever;' and in order that the expected advent might be accelerated, he prays that God would raise up a thousand to spread the flame. But if many of his brethren gladly co-operated with him in these attempts, he still observed, with keen regret, that the work of revivalism did not meet with such general support from the preachers as he could have desired. He was also deeply grieved to discover symptoms of distrust, if not of dislike, on the part of some of his fellow-ministers towards himself: 'I perceive,' he writes, 'that some preachers have not freedom with me, which makes me cautious, as I see they are in some pain in my company.' Feeling must have been in a very confused condition, when a man, such as William Bramwell—personally so estimable, and professionally so single-hearted—could give pain to a brother in the Gospel by his mere presence. The probability is, however, that his anxiety for the preservation of Wesleyanism, and in particular of the Wesleyan ministry, from the encroachments of that worldly spirit, which has always found its way, sooner or later, into the sanctuary of every faith hitherto established amongst men, had been misconstrued by many. Few men have ever been actuated by a more absorbing passion for pure unsecularized religion than himself, but perhaps the earnestness and

large amount of spiritual good, out of deference to mere ceremonials. The problem required very little study; suppose a woman transgresses the established usages of society, and, by the blessing of God—for without that blessing it could not be done—becomes the human agent in the salvation of one sinner, what ratio does the offence bear to the achievement? An unit to infinity! The arithmetic of such men may appear strange and exaggerated; but, according to their views, the very lowest price at which a single soul could be valued, was more than a 'whole world,' and the very shortest duration which could be assigned to its happiness or woe was—an eternity!

honesty with which he expressed his views on the subject, might appear too presuming in one so young.

Previous to his entrance upon this circuit, as one of its stationed ministers, Mr. Bramwell had been instrumental in procuring for the Nottingham people a new chapel, of which they were much in want. His connexion with this edifice was quite characteristic: it was through prayer. The circumstances are related by Mr. Tatham, then a local preacher in the circuit. In May, 1798, Mr. Bramwell and Mr. Longden paid a visit to Nottingham. For nine months previously, the society had been in search of a suitable piece of ground as a site for the chapel which was intended to replace the one lost during the recent secession; but all their applications had failed; every eligible spot had been refused them, and, at the time of this visit, the people were almost in despair of obtaining their object. Mr. Tatham went to see Mr. Bramwell on his arrival, and told him of their perplexity. What was to be done? 'Done, Brother Tatham! let us pray about it!' They knelt accordingly: the minister did not hesitate for a moment to address the Almighty upon the subject of a building site, any more than he would had the question been the redemption of a human soul. First, it was the prayer of reason: 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the cattle also upon a thousand hills. The hearts of all men are in his hands, and he can turn them as the rivers of the south.' As he proceeded, it expanded into the prayer of faith: 'Lord! thou seest their necessity; I believe thou wilt provide a piece of land for them, on which to build this chapel.' But this was not enough; something more definite was required: he continued until faith soared almost into immediate enjoyment. 'Lord!' said he, with emphasis 'I believe thou wilt find them a piece of land *this day*.' To the desponding brother, who knelt with him, and who saw no human probability that their object would be speedily gained—much less gained that very day—this expectation appeared to be presumptuous. Its fulfilment at such short notice, and after so many failures, seemed to demand a miracle. "When I called to remembrance," says he, "the various applications we had made, and the disappointments which had followed, I found it difficult to believe against hope." And truly, it might well appear presumptuous to suppose that, after nine months' toil, which had only served to show that every door was closed against them, all their difficulties would vanish in a single day, and by means of a single prayer! However, it was resolved to make another tour of inspection round the town, which was

accordingly done by Mr. Bramwell and Mr. Longden themselves. On their return, they informed Mr. Tatham that they had seen a plot, which they considered suitable for the contemplated building. This was, in truth, a piece of ground, belonging to a gentleman of the name of Sherwin, about which several applications *had already* been made, and peremptorily refused; but in consequence of a simple mistake as to the owner, Mr. Tatham went immediately to *another* gentleman, whose name had been unwittingly mentioned, (Mr. Fellows), and whose garden adjoined Mr. Sherwin's property. Part of this, it struck him, might perhaps be obtained after all. The request was soon made, and, to his great joy, immediately granted. That very day, and within a few hours after the prayer 'against hope' had been preferred, the society found itself in possession of the object which it had sought in vain for months before!

But it remained to build a chapel upon this prayer-won site. The task was one of considerable difficulty, as the pecuniary resources of the community were extremely limited. The Wesleyan Conference, however, authorised an application to some other circuits, and Mr. Bramwell was despatched to Sheffield upon this errand, a few months after his removal to Nottingham. He made his appearance suddenly amongst his old friends. His presence, says Mr. Longden, "produced an astonishing and almost electrical effect upon the society. The remembrance of many happy seasons spent with each other in public and in private, passed in overwhelming review, and the people could not sing, nor could their beloved minister preach or pray, without the most powerful efforts and frequent interruptions. Their joy was indeed ecstatic. When the object of his visit was known, the people vied with each other, and seemed as if they would pour in their whole store. Their bounty was so lavish, that he had to restrain the feelings, and limit the donations, of many; till, oppressed with the torrent of love and gratitude, he suddenly left the town, to prevent the poor from exceeding the proper bounds of their benevolence. Multitudes tendered their voluntary offerings, without making any inquiry about the object to which they were to be applied. In this affectionate manner did they testify their love to a revered pastor, who had been a sharer in their joys, and had borne a part in their sorrows."

Such rapturous scenes in public, may be beautifully contrasted with a little closet interlude, thus briefly recorded by the same gentleman in his journal: "December 11.—To-day

W. S. was *restored* in my closet while Mr. B[ramwell] was praying for him: let glory redound to God."

This visit was a happy one indeed. For himself, he found a greeting of a most rapturous and flattering description, and for his circuit he reaped the contributions of the Sheffield friends to an unexpected amount. The chapel was soon completed: the lost building was replaced by one equally as large; and here, from Sunday to Sunday, Mr. Bramwell and his colleagues had the satisfaction of preaching to a crowded and attentive congregation. Here, too, as in other places of worship within the circuit, many a spiritual victory was achieved—many a poor sinner liberated from the iron yoke and galling slavery of sin. The days came in which "glorious displays of the Lord's omnipotence and of his willingness to save perishing sinners" were witnessed by hundreds. "At several of our meetings," says Mr. Tatham, "the outpouring of the Spirit was so manifest that the whole assembly was powerfully wrought upon. It seemed as if the Lord was about to 'sweep the nations, and shake the earth till all proclaimed him God.'"—"Souls are saved here almost every day," Mr. Bramwell writes, 'but we still look for a *greater* shower.' And subsequently—"the work goes on; some blessed showers have fallen in Nottingham. The effusion of the Spirit is great and powerful." And so much indeed did the work progress, that the new chapel was found too strait for its increasing congregation: many applicants were unable to obtain admission; and though it was soon enlarged, the added space was almost immediately occupied. Multitudes of all classes, who had been previously indifferent to the claims of religion, now gave it their serious attention. Many Deists abandoned their errors, and entered the church. The societies were extending and improving on every hand. Mr. Bramwell was happy in the discharge of his exciting, but arduous duties as the promoter of this auspicious reformation. There was no pause in his labours. To live a useless life, was the fate he dreaded and deprecated above all others. Early and late he was at work: almost every moment he was to be found practising some portion of his duties, whether obligatory or self-imposed:—now fasting, watching, meditating, praying in private; then visiting, exhorting, comforting, in families; and again, pleading or preaching in public. His reputation, of course, continued to spread; and amongst other eloquent proofs of the celebrity with which his name was already invested, one is related by himself, in a letter to the Rev. J. Drake:—"A man, who had been seeking salvation five years,

came a hundred miles to see me last week. I never saw one sunk so low in unbelief. He made no struggle, but seemingly gave up all. On Saturday night the Lord saved him. Oh, the change! Scarcely less significant is the acknowledgment implied in a remark made by Mrs. Taft to her husband, the Rev. Dr. Taft:—"In the beginning of her last illness," the latter observes, "her greatest trial, she would often inform me, was the being prevented from hearing Mr. Bramwell."

Yet amidst all these various occupations, he found leisure to compile and arrange a small work, which he entitled, '*The Salvation Preacher.*' It was an abridgment of a translation by D'Oyley from the French. The object of the treatise is, to explain the true constituents of Christian oratory, and to furnish a manual of Christian eloquence, illustrated by frequent references to the opinions of the Fathers, and by numerous extracts from the writings of St. Chrysostom. The gorgeous and animated compositions of the latter—him of the 'golden mouth'—the original author appears to have regarded as the very perfection of human sublimity. The advice which this little work affords on various topics connected with pulpit ministrations, and particularly on the grand qualifications required for the office, recommended it strongly to Mr. Bramwell, and led him to believe that a popular abridgment might prove of considerable utility. He observed, he remarks in the preface, "two particulars in its tendency: the first, to rouse from slumber those preachers, who, from a profession of depending wholly upon the Lord for everything, neglect the proper means for improving the judgment and exciting the affections. The second, to preserve the studious minister from that dependence on his studies which prevents the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit in the act of preaching." Not the least of its merits is the sagacity with which it indicates the evils too often associated with pulpit oratory, and perhaps more so half a century ago than now. The first chapter strikes at the most common of disqualifications—"the want of unction (devout feeling) and emotion in the generality of preachers;" that is, the want of power to move the heart, conscience, or moral nature. "It is not the *understanding* that makes us good men; all the operations of the *mind*, how perfect soever they may be, will never render you deserving of God's friendship. The *heart* is the seat of holiness." If the philosophy of this short sentence be correct, and so we believe it to be, it exposes one of the most awful and deadly fallacies that has ever been practised in this world. In other chapters, the sinister motives which actuate ministers, such as the desire of

applause, the conciliation of patrons, the exhibition of skill in the arrangement of a discourse, and other by-purposes, are denounced. By the publication of this work, Mr. Bramwell hoped to stimulate the zeal of his ministerial brethren of all denominations. Labouring as he was for the welfare of the people, he was not less anxious to suggest something which might be of service to preachers also. Nor was the cultivation of his own piety neglected, whilst thus toiling for others. The pursuit of his calling never produced on him the effect which it sometimes does when preaching has become a business, and the duties of the sacred office form the very routine of existence. He never forgot, whilst winning converts, reclaiming apostates, and edifying believers, that his own soul might perish as easily as theirs, and that daily progress in piety was not less essential for him than for the meanest of his flock. 'I am stretching towards the mark,' says he, 'my soul continually goes out after the Lord.—Oh, what need of keeping up the strife every day!—Oh, my leanness! I am lost in shame, when I see the promises, many of which are not yet fulfilled in my soul. Lord, give me faith! I am striving, with continued prayer, to live nearer to God than I have ever done, and he brings my soul into closer union. I live with Jesus: He is my all. Oh, he lays me at his feet. I am less than nothing in His sight. This walking with God—this conversation in Heaven—oh, how I am ashamed! I sink in silent love. My soul longs for the country—the heavenly place. Sometimes I am tempted that all my way is wrong, and that there must be a nearer way. I feel grace comes only by little, and but a little at once. Yet I never lived so much with Christ, so much in God, as at present.' And thus, with fear and trembling, was the preacher daily striving to work out his own salvation, whilst urging the same duty incessantly upon the attention of the people.

In this circuit, Mr. Bramwell remained three years. His own exertions, and those of his colleagues (the Rev. Messrs. John Reynolds and Richard Pattison, 1798-9; John Pipe and W. B. Timperley, 1799-1800; and John Pipe and Isaac Lilly, 1800-1), had been liberally acknowledged by heaven. During the first of these years, the breach in the society had been virtually repaired. The number lost by the secession, about 300, was balanced by the number added within the same period. In the second year, the new members were still more numerous, and at the termination of Mr. Bramwell's ministry in Nottingham, the societies, it was found, had obtained a reinforcement of from 1000 to 1100 souls in all. How far he had

aided in this work, may be inferred from the testimony of Mr. Clarke, of Nottingham. "I heard," observes the latter, "nearly all the sermons which he preached in the town of Nottingham, and do not recollect having once had a barren season, except one time when he was lame, and could not stand to preach. I think it impossible that any one could sit under him without being benefited." And again, observes his colleague, the Rev. J. Pipe: "Perhaps Mr. Bramwell, in all his travels, never witnessed more glorious displays of Divine power than in this circuit."

Glorious indeed they must have been, since the impression made upon an individual, then a child of no more than four or five years of age, has been described, after a lapse of many years, not only as singularly vivid, but absolutely ineffaceable. The particular occasion to which he refers was a 'renewal of the covenant' at the new chapel in Halifax Place, Mr. Bramwell presiding. The vast assembly then collected exhibited a scene of extraordinary excitement, tempered, however, by indubitable indications of awe and respectful devotion. It was obvious that some influence, of no every-day character, was present in the edifice. To describe it would be impracticable: it appeared, it was *felt*, to be truly divine. The child, young as he was, was affected like others; it laid hold upon all hearts, and hung over them until they sank, fluid and powerless, beneath the mighty visitation. In the midst of this solemn scene, and whilst all were silently engaged, the minister rose, and in tones which thrilled through the heart like the sound of a trumpet, enjoined those who were 'for heaven' to stand up! Instantly, and as if a vast army had suddenly risen from the ground at the word of command, the whole congregation sprang to its feet! Moved by a common impulse, hundreds of hands were raised, and from every lip there burst the loud triumphant shout of—"Glory!" It was such a shout as sometimes pierces through the thunder of the battle-field, and preludes the fiery charge which issues in victory. They were *all* for heaven! There was not one present who did not share in the emotion of that inspiring hour. The tears of joy which moistened almost every countenance, the holy rapture which beamed in every eye, would have told how deep was the feeling that agitated the assembly, if the tremendous shout of exultation had not already proclaimed it with such emphasis. The child, too, had participated in all the excitement of the occasion: at the word of command, he sprang upon a seat, lifted his hand, and joined in the peal of praise: to his young fancy it seemed as if it would have uplifted the very roof of the

building. He prayed as fervently—felt the power of the world to come as forcibly—and enjoyed at the moment as vigorous a faith, perhaps, as the adult Christian. The consciousness of a Deity, and the direct conviction of spiritual things, were so vividly experienced, he says, that nothing will ever eradicate the impression. To whatever depth of degradation he might fall, the remembrance of that scene, and of the feelings by which it was accompanied, must remain, for him, a practical exemplification of the force and reality of Divine influences.

The last year of Mr. Bramwell's sojourn in Nottingham was one of temporal distress, though of religious progression. The dearth of 1800 was severely felt in this locality; many of the Wesleyan society suffered grievously from the panic, and were compelled to undergo the bitter ordeal of famine and destitution. His sympathies were peculiarly excited, and all that he could spare was cheerfully applied for their relief. The expenses of his household were so far curtailed, that his family was reduced to the scantiest regimen: his double anxiety to narrow his claims upon the funds of the community as much as possible, and yet to extort something from his abridged allowance for the assistance of others, perhaps led him in some degree to overlook the well-known maxim, that charity commences at home. Much ill-health amongst his children was the consequence of their stinted and unwholesome fare at this unhappy period. But the good he did to others, and the help, both spiritual and temporal, which he was enabled to afford, mitigated the grief he felt during the pressure of the calamity. It was also a matter of great consolation that not a single Wesleyan, however poor or famished, so far as he knew, was concerned in the commotions and outrages which occurred at this period in Nottingham, as well as other places.

Nor was he remiss when the country was thrown into a state of excitement by the threatened invasion under Bonaparte. To avert such a disaster, he employed his peculiar weapon. How far it could have availed against the cannon and bayonets of the French it would be difficult to say; at all events, it was a novel kind of warfare, which would have sorely puzzled the conqueror of Marengo, had he learnt that an humble Wesleyan preacher placed as much faith in a few well-directed prayers as he did in a whole park of artillery! But, whatever might be the effect of Mr. Bramwell's intercessions with regard to the projected descent upon England, their influence upon his flock was such as to tranquillize their minds, by the very fervour and confidence with which they were offered.

In another matter, which the Dissenters deemed of the highest importance—the introduction of a bill into parliament, under the auspices of Michael Angelo Taylor, whereby their privileges would have been curtailed—Mr. Bramwell applied himself to prayer in a similar manner, and invoked the opposition of Heaven to the measure. One Sunday evening, whilst officiating before a large assembly, he made it the subject of a most impassioned supplication. For some time he toiled as if no certain answer could be obtained; but at length his earnestness appeared to prevail: his language suddenly changed—he had received some communication from above! ‘Lord!’ said he, ‘thou hast now *told* me that this bill shall never pass into a law. It is out of the power of any men or set of men to bring it to pass!’ These words, confidently uttered, startled his hearers. Mighty as they knew him to be in prayer, and familiar as was his intercourse with heaven, they could not participate in his faith: it was apparently too rash and summary to appease their fears. They would wait. A week passed—the measure was crushed.*

The prayers of this ‘Wrestling Jacob,’ it is related, were still more effectual in healing the sick and almost restoring sight to the blind. Mr. Clarke, who has been already quoted, was himself the subject of one of these extraordinary cures. “I was once attacked,” he states, “by a violent pleuritic fever, and all around me despaired of my life; many of our kind friends visited me, and supplication was offered up to God, without ceasing, for my recovery. But all prayers were in vain, till Mr. Bramwell came home out of the circuit. He immediately called to see me, and was quite astonished on beholding the woful change in my appearance. He thought I bore all the marks of speedy dissolution; and, casting on me a look of the greatest sympathy, raised my head by means of a pillow. He then retired to the foot of the bed, and began to pray to God on my behalf. His faith seemed to gain strength as he proceeded. He continued his intercessions with the greatest fervency; and, in an agony, asked, in submission to the will of God, that I might be restored. The Lord answered his servant’s prayers. For I presently experienced such a sweet tranquillity of soul, as I am unable to describe. From that moment my recovery began, and I was soon strong enough to resume my ordinary occupations.”

* This anecdote is related by Mr. Tatham. It need scarcely be said that the extinction of the obnoxious bill is not attributed to Mr. Bramwell’s devotional exertions. The share which he might have in inducing such a result, if he had any, is just one of those perplexing problems which, we fear, will be too frequently mooted in this volume for the patience of most of our readers.

Thus did a single prayer uttered over the bed of the sick man make all the difference, apparently, between a 'speedy dissolution,' and a speedy restoration!

A still more marvellous case is said to have occurred. Our Thaumaturgus went occasionally to preach at the house of Mr. Thomas Greensmith, of Watnall, near Nottingham. William, the son of this gentleman (then about nine years of age), was labouring under some affection of the eyes, which rendered the light intolerable. Even bandages could not afford him the requisite protection, and he was, therefore, confined to a dark room as much as possible. On one occasion, Mr. Bramwell had spent the night at the house, and when preparing to depart, the next day, he inquired for the afflicted boy. William was summoned from his darkened chamber, and presented. The guest placed his hand on the child's head, and lifted up his eyes as if in prayer. Not a syllable was uttered aloud. He then turned away, and mounted his horse, which stood at the door. But lo! a wonderful work had already been wrought! Before the minister had well retired, William tore off the bandages, looked through the window, and inquired if Mr. Bramwell were gone. His eyes, it is said, *were healed*, and from that time the affection never returned!*

Mr. Bramwell was himself sometimes subdued by the marvellous influences with which he appeared to deal so freely. He was once preaching at a village, in this circuit, where many persons had abandoned the Wesleyan body, and united themselves with the Society of Friends. At the close of the sermon, he requested the congregation to remain, and hold a 'Quaker's meeting.' They were all to pray in silence for the descent of the Holy Spirit. For some time, accordingly, a solemn stillness pervaded the assembly. But at length the Mighty One came; the worshippers were strangely moved, some were overpowered by their feelings, others fell from their seats, as if prostrated by some external violence. And the man who had invited this extraordinary visitation, was himself seized—himself overwhelmed! Like the fabled magician, he had invoked a spirit before which he bent like a reed, and in whose presence he sunk helpless and entranced. 'Lord,' said he, in his agitation, 'I never thought of *this!*' It far surpassed even *his* conceptions of a Divine effusion.

Another illustration of the marvellous is to be found in an incident related by Mr. Tatham. This gentleman and Mr.

* Vide Appendix (A) for some observations on these extraordinary cases.

Bramwell went one day to see a man who was supposed to be dying. They found him lodged in a damp cellar, and in a state of great destitution; a few rags were his only covering. A woman, whom he addressed as his wife, attended him. After a few moments' conversation, Mr. Bramwell abruptly exclaimed, 'All is not right here! There is something amiss in this place!' Mr. Tatham might well be surprised by this sudden ejaculation; but more so, when his companion turned to the woman, and said, 'This man is not your husband. You never were married to him; but for several years have been living in sin and wickedness!' It was an adventurous charge for one who had no reason, apparently, to suspect that there was anything wrong; but it proved to be a true one. The delinquents wept, confessed, and straightway sought forgiveness of Him whose laws they had broken. However explained, this was not a solitary case; and Mr. Tatham states that he frequently knew him detect religious impostors—as indeed other credible and impartial witnesses have attested in various circuits.

The Conference of 1801 assembled, and it was necessary for him to look out for another pastoral field. He was invited to Leeds, and accepted the call. He left Nottingham with honour; the circuit had flourished spiritually under the care of its zealous ministers; and when Mr. Bramwell was removed, the number of members in the society was just *double* what it had been when he entered. The impression he had made respecting his own personal piety, may be gathered from the compendious eulogium pronounced by a scrutinising observer. "I was well acquainted with Mr. Bramwell during the three years of his travelling in our circuit. I watched his conduct narrowly, that I might, if possible, discover some flaw in a character so celebrated for holiness. But, after a strict observance of his actions for a length of time, I was compelled to draw this conclusion,—I have never yet seen his equal."





CHAPTER IV.

Leeds Circuit, 1801—Unfavorable Impressions—Dejection and Sufferings—Nearer to Heaven—Appointed to Wetherby, 1803—Contracted Sphere of Exertion—Hull Circuit, 1804—Three Weeks of Prayer—Cures by Prayer—Mrs. Adams's Case—Sunderland, 1806—His Expectations and Agreeable Reception—'Cooke's Chaff'—Progress—The Roaring Lion—His 'Life and Times'—Destruction of his Manuscripts—Prayer—Incident—Courtesies of the Sunderland Friends—The 'Half-brethren'—Young Ministers—Dr. Taft and Anecdote—Liverpool, 1808—Satanic Artillery—Singular Escape—Rev. V. Ward's Statement—Sheffield again, 1810—Public and Private Exertions—Serjeant-major Riley—Mr. Henry Longden—Honest Funeral Panegyric—Plain-speaking.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire.

SHELLEY.



IN September, 1801, Mr. Bramwell commenced his services in Leeds. His ministerial associates were the Rev. John Barber and the Rev. Richard Reece. At first, he had to bear up against a feeling of distrust which had insinuated itself into many minds. His reputation was that of a stimulating and, perhaps, somewhat boisterous preacher:—too much addicted to noisy prayer-meetings, and too little to calm, regular, and argumentative preaching. This was a matter of great discouragement to him. The spiritual state of the circuit also, was not such as he wished, nor such as he had been lately accustomed to behold; but perhaps in this respect, some might deem his demands extravagant, and his expectations Utopian. 'Things are low indeed in this circuit,' he writes, 'and means must have been used to make them as they are.' But of these means he did not wish to say anything: 'only pray for me,' he adds. Something, however, must be done to animate the people, and overcome the obstructions. 'I must, in a few weeks, if spared, strike home, and leave the whole to God. I see hell will rise, but our God is Almighty!' He hastened to grapple with the adversary. His voice was lifted up as fearlessly, as strenuously, as ever. The simple energy which

always distinguished him, was exhibited in this circuit with its usual effects in some measure; though not so satisfactorily to himself as had been the case in other localities. Converts were gained in considerable numbers, and great hopes were indulged by some of an extensive revival. The prejudice which several had conceived against him, on his entrance into this field of labour, was almost superseded on better acquaintance. But still his path was dark. He could not tell why Providence had placed him there. His progress as a minister and the prosperity of the church were not what he expected. 'Numbers,' he writes, 'are saved in Leeds; but I do not see one yard before me.' A sense of oppression, as if the religious atmosphere of the circuit were loaded with something pernicious, and a feeling that some extraordinary resistance was opposed to his exertions, almost overwhelmed him at this period. 'I say sometimes,' he remarks, 'woe is me! for I am a man beset with opposition from all the powers of hell! You would be surprised what plans I have discovered to prevent the general crush; but I see shakings through the whole. The work does not extend as I could wish. Here I mourn and wait the hour.' And long he waited too. One year fled—another also rolled away, but the 'general crush' came not. There were partial tremours on every side: but the glorious agitations, the pentecostal 'shakings,' which he so much loved, and so fervently desired, were not permitted during his residence in this circuit.

Doubtless, much of the dejection which he endured at this period, and which gave such a melancholy cast to his correspondence, was due to the peculiarities of his position with regard to some of his ministerial brethren, and others who were averse to the revival system. Instead of diminishing, these difficulties had only increased. Perhaps he might expect too much; but if so, it was not for himself—not for an institution: it was for his Divine master. Believing that the work of Methodism was the work of *conversion*, he was distressed to observe the slightest coldness in those whom he expected to prove its warmest promoters. If that fiery zeal which had been so opportunely kindled under Wesley, and which had so gloriously revived the fainting heart of religion in the land, were now to decline—perhaps soon to die away—what was to become of Wesleyanism? The very soul of the system would plainly be gone! Dissent would have been in vain, and Methodism would have risen to little purpose, if, in a few years, the very employment of its founder—the revival of religion—was to be discountenanced in a fol-

lower! Upon this point Mr. Bramwell was most sensitive. Pure and unselfish in his own motives, he could not understand either the apathy, or the opposition of others. If men were but converted, he looked only at the fact and its consequences; he cared little for the manner or the circumstances. His own purpose was to promote these conversions—what was the purpose of opposition? More—what would be its effect? There was no word in his vocabulary which would adequately express the perilous consequences of tampering with the means of salvation! Perhaps his feelings on this subject were somewhat morbid, and his suspicions unduly exaggerated: but, whether right or wrong in his views, they were more creditable to his party, even if errors, than frigid indifference or languid satisfaction would have been to his judgment. If he feared for Methodism, or mistrusted any of its ministers, it was his passion for souls which made him both fear and mistrust.—There were also other causes of distress: but at these we can scarcely so much as hint. There are persons yet living, we believe, who might be unpleasantly implicated in the remarks which might be made upon this painful subject. It is enough to say, that Mr. Bramwell suffered acutely—it is unnecessary to say, that he suffered unjustly. He readily forgave the wrongs that were done him: but they must have been of no ordinary provocation, since his affectionate consort, with all her charity, could scarcely achieve the same noble effort of self-denial.

But amidst these discomforts he could refer to, at least, one consolatory fact. He was 'nearer heaven than ever.' His mind was undergoing severe discipline; whilst passing through this slough of care and temptation, his spiritual faculties were gradually refining, and the vision of glory was presented more vividly to his longing eyes. In the town where his career was destined to conclude, he was now employing himself assiduously in making preparations for his departure, as if the event were already at hand. 'Many,' says he to Mr. Drake, 'are departing in different places, and the next call may be to us to "come up hither."' I never saw such need to be always ready. I have given myself to the Lord lately, a daily sacrifice; and am receiving him for my all in all. I do live with him, and wait every day until my change come.' Yet this idea of a speedy removal was occasionally checked by other considerations. 'I am waiting,' he says again, 'for my change, and yet I sometimes think my greatest work is to come.' There is something remarkable in these surmises. Anticipating death, as if the place suggested the event of

which it was to be the scene, he was induced also to suspect that, after all, there was more to be accomplished than he had yet done—as if Time had whispered prophetically in his ear, that but one half of his ministerial existence had transpired. In fact, at this period, his greatest efforts remained to be made, and multitudes of souls were unconsciously awaiting the hour when his impressive exhortations or impetuous appeals should rouse them from the perilous lethargy of sin. Only one half of his ministerial career *had been* completed at the time when he was indulging in these speculations.

During his stay in Leeds, the town was visited by a malignant fever, from which he suffered. An acquaintance called upon him, and thus describes the interview:—"I found him in bed. After a little conversation together, he told me to pray. When I had complied with his request, he himself prayed very earnestly, and then said to me, 'Pray again.' Both of us prayed again and again, several times. He then exclaimed, in a solemn manner, and with great force, 'Are we not sensible that this room is filled with God, angels, and glory?' The Lord had rebuked the complaint; 'the fever owned his touch and fled,' and this man of God recommenced his ministerial labours about a week afterwards."

After a sojourn of two years in this circuit, Mr. Bramwell was transferred to Wetherby (1803). His stay there was only short—a single year. The circuit itself he describes as small and comfortable; but it offered no fitting field for the exercise of those energies which, in larger and more populous districts, had been so successfully employed. It was too 'confined on every side' for him. The chapels were diminutive and the congregations scanty. He could not toil as usual, and therefore read and prayed as much as possible at home. His great foe, however, was at his elbow, and endeavoured to turn these circumstances to advantage, by tempting him to set up his 'tabernacle of rest.' The suggestion was skillfully supported by playing upon his old feeling of self-distrust. The preacher saw that a larger place was desirable as it respected utility, but he 'trembled at the idea;' he had such a view of his talents as made him blush: he wondered how it was he had already taken so much upon him! A temptation like this, however, could scarcely make any lasting impression upon a soul which was 'on flame to work or suffer.' He was convinced that no one could be said to live, unless all his talent were laid out, and laid out in God's way.*

* Rev. S. Dunn's Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Tatham, p. 171.

Whilst he remained at Wetherby his work was prosecuted with no deficiency of zeal. True, he complains of the 'death of the circuit,' and of the 'agony of raising souls' from a state of religious stupor, but, notwithstanding this, he was enabled to report to his correspondents—and indeed his letters are generally pious bulletins,* announcing some victories over Satan, and the acquisition of some immortal spirits—that 'souls were saved nearly every night.' Nor was he deprived entirely of those extraordinary visitations, which gladdened his heart more than any other occurrence, and produced a kind of ecstasy, as if he were already inhaling the atmosphere of Paradise. 'We had a great meeting last Sunday,' he writes, 'in a barn twenty yards long. Persons came to it from nearly all parts of Yorkshire. I think I never saw more souls filled with the Holy Ghost, and many were delivered from the guilt of sin.' Occasionally, it seems, strong pulsations were felt "beneath the ribs of death!"

Respecting himself, he has happy news to communicate. 'I am, with all my soul, striving every day, and never enjoyed greater power and love.' 'My dear brother Drake, my life is prayer. I assure you I am just in Heaven. It is the Lord.'

Instead, however, of a literal translation to Heaven, he made a local one from Wetherby to Hull. In 1804, he entered upon this latter circuit, which offered much greater scope for his talents than the former. Its spiritual state also was far more agreeable; but nothing short of angelic piety and perfection could ever fulfil the wishes of William Bramwell. He must set every agency to work for Hull as earnestly as he had done for other places. His colleagues were men of great zeal as well as himself;† and their conjoint efforts were

* These may be advantageously contrasted with the bulletins of warriors who fight with metallic instead of spiritual swords. A return of the 'saved' is far more glorious—at least to Heaven—than a return of the killed and wounded. It is probable that the report of a great victory over the forces of evil, by which numbers have been brought to life, would transport the public far less than the tidings of a great battle, in which thousands had been put to death. And yet the noiseless campaigns, carried on by the captains of the cross—the fierce grapple with the agencies of sin—the varied fortunes of a desperate and exterminating conflict—the ecstasy of conquest, when it is of an immortal and for an eternity—the bitterness of defeat, when a wretched victim is torn away, in spite of prayers and efforts to perish for ever—these are a few of the circumstances which, when duly considered, ought to give an intensity of interest to the holy wars of Christian heroes;—wars, in comparison with which our strifes of the Roses and Peninsular campaigns are dull and insipid squabbles!

† They were the Rev. Walter Griffith and the Rev. Samuel Taylor, with both of whom he contracted a warm and durable friendship. After a separation of many years, Mr. Bramwell met the former gentleman at Conference—we believe at Sheffield. The interview was a touching one, and deeply affected the spectators. The moment they perceived each other, they sprang forward, burst into tears, and tenderly embraced. The cold ceremonies of ordinary recognition were overleaped in this reunion of two hearts, which had throbbed in harmony, not merely to the impulses of mutual esteem, but also to those of true Christian fellowship. It was probably a type—in all but the tears—of the happy meeting which would soon take place above.

eminently successful. 'The Lord is with us here,' says Mr. Bramwell, 'I may say numbers have been saved. There is a good pruning, and some planting among us. In the meetings, in general, some are saved—and nearly all in the same way.' These results might have contented most ministers; but they did not one whose desire for spiritual conquest only increased with success. He would endeavour to multiply the gains of the church—the triumphs of the cross—still more. The expedient he adopted was 'three weeks of agony.' This completed, says he, 'I now see the Lord working.' He could scarcely preach without witnessing 'some fruit of his labour.' Was *this*, then, enough, when such precious results were produced under almost every sermon? By no means! 'Souls are saved, indeed,' he exclaims, 'but, oh! I want to see much greater things.' The work was not sufficiently general: in time, however, he had the pleasure of seeing still 'greater things.' At length (1806) he could announce that the 'flame of love and salvation' was then 'breaking out on every side:' he knew, he adds, it was impossible to fast and pray in vain!

By the same means also—prayer—he seemed to revive the sick in body as well as the sick in soul. An instance occurred in the case of a daughter of Mr. Thomas Ryder, a local preacher, residing at the time in Holderness. Mr. Bramwell was accustomed to sojourn at the house of this individual on his visits to the neighbourhood. On one of these occasions, he was informed that the daughter of his host was afflicted with some complaint, to such a degree as to excite the worst fears of the parents. He made some inquiries respecting her, which were answered. Could he prescribe? No—but he could pray! He was no physician—but he was a successful pleader. They knelt down accordingly: "he prayed with peculiar fervour,"—so Mr. Ryder relates—"and apparently in strong faith, that the Lord would bless the child, and speedily restore her. The Almighty heard and answered the prayer of his servant. Our daughter began to recover from *that hour*, and never afterwards had a severe attack."

In another case, the result was still more striking. It is that of Mr. Brayshay, of Hull. This gentleman's arm was injured by a fall; but as the hurt did not seem to be of a very serious character at first, no great attention was paid to it. In a short time, however, mortification ensued, and advanced with such rapidity, that it became necessary to amputate the limb. The patient was unfortunately in a state of excessive weakness, and this compelled his medical attendants to defer

the operation from day to day. The mere dressing of the wound became hazardous; an asthmatical cough of some standing was superseded by a convulsive hiccup, and his condition became so desperate, that at length all expectation of recovery was abandoned. He prepared for the dread rencontre with death: his family were assembled; the parting benediction was bestowed; the solemn farewell uttered: he had nothing to do but die! At this hour, however, a few Christians were collected at a 'band-meeting,' at some little distance from the house, and were praying loudly for the restoration of their brother. Their faith was as strong as their petitions were fervent. The Holy One appeared to answer in power, and such was their conviction of success, that one of them went to the house to communicate this assurance of recovery. But the great Physician had already been there! Whilst they were praying, He had entered the sick chamber, and laid his hand upon the sufferer. The convulsive hiccup straightway forsook him, the former cough returned, and the gloomy anticipations of his friends were speedily dissipated. Death, indeed, appeared to have been defeated in the very act of seizing a victim, and in a short time the patient was completely restored. It seems that Mr. Bramwell, and one of his colleagues, Mr. Griffith, had called at Mr. Brayshay's house on their way to the meeting, and made his case one of special supplication in the little assembly. The circumstances were indeed so remarkable, that most people regarded the result as the miraculous effect of victorious prayer.

Another incident of a more private nature, but scarcely less striking, perhaps, was communicated to Mr. Sigston by the Rev. James Everett. Mr. Bramwell had been in the circuit on duty; and on his arrival in Hull, instead of proceeding at once to his own dwelling, according to custom, he turned his steps towards the residence of a friend, Mr. Adams. On entering, he accosted Mrs. Adams somewhat abruptly. "Come," said he, "tell me the state of your mind. You have been unusually impressed upon my thoughts all the way from Cottingham." The lady complied. He found that she was really suffering grievously from some peculiar feelings, of which he could not previously have known anything. He listened attentively to her statement, and then exclaimed, "Let us pray, for the Lord is about to bring deliverance." They knelt down, says the narrator, "he wrestled with God; the snare was broken, and she was completely delivered."*

* Sigston's Life of Mr. Bramwell, p. 179.

After two years of assiduous and successful labour in this circuit, Mr. Bramwell was appointed to Sunderland (1806). His reception was extremely cordial—so much so, that he thought the friends too kind; and fearing lest his piety should be in any measure impaired by their attentions and hospitalities, he resorted to watching and abstinence by way of protective discipline. He had, however, entered the circuit at a critical period, and much circumspection was required in his conduct and proceedings. The society here, as he had so frequently found it elsewhere, was heaving under a recent hurricane; excited, it would seem, in consequence of certain eccentric doctrines propounded by a preceding pastor, the Rev. Mr. Cooke. It was necessary to allay this commotion in the first instance. He had been selected and sent hither by the Conference expressly for this purpose. The usual course was therefore pursued. Positively—the Gospel was preached in simplicity and power; negatively—the controversy was avoided in every shape and form. A large parcel of pamphlets on the subject, but on which side we know not, was forwarded to him, under the expectation that he would promote their distribution: they were forthwith returned to the sender. Sometimes the question was mooted in conversation when he was present; he would fall on his knees, and, to use the figurative language of a spectator, “blow it away with prayer.” At others, a simple, but significant act, was sufficient to suppress the dangerous topic. He was one day in a respectable company when it was introduced; he immediately rose, went to the window, and opening the sash, said, in a peculiar tone which could not be mistaken, “Let us have some air.” The subject was instantly dropped. His ministerial brethren were also earnestly entreated to observe the same abstinent policy. The work of prayer and exhortation meanwhile proceeded with its wonted vigour; and, it need scarcely be said, with its wonted effects. A great prospect soon opened before him in this circuit. ‘Cooke’s chaff,’ he writes, ‘had nearly blinded the people, but crowds were coming to hear, and their eyes beginning to open. In one love-feast, there was a great shower—ten persons were brought into liberty. I do not know how it may end; if as it begins, we shall have a great work.’ A few weeks afterwards, he states that he had seen 400 brought into the society—nearly all saved from evil, as he believed—and that the work was still advancing. The prospect, he adds exultingly, is great. A few weeks more, and the total number enlisted since the last Conference was found to amount to 500: the movement was active in the country,

the congregations in town 'astonishing;' and in the three chapels there, every seat had its occupant. Places in the circuit, where the regular preaching had been monthly (for these were days when Wesleyanism preached less and yet effected more than now), began to clamour for it once a fortnight. A fourth pastor was found necessary for the augmented flock. On every hand there were proofs that "Cooke's chaff" was giving place to the genuine Gospel-grain. Amongst the military alone, the converts were numerous; in one quarter, sixty joined the society—lions turned into lambs, as he observes. The soldiers were attracted in a peculiar manner, and the spacious chapel in Sans street exhibited an intermixture of martial and civil attire, which could not but suggest very pleasing reflections to the preacher. The aisles were sometimes filled by them, and not unfrequently, officers as well as privates were amongst his hearers. He was also consulted at home by many of the soldiers—sometimes at the early hour of four or five o'clock in the morning. One rifleman, in particular, might have been seen making his way about that time to his pastor's house, for the purpose of obtaining spiritual or temporal advice. It was the same gallant fellow who, when reproved by a superior for his fanatical tendencies, boldly vindicated himself, and somewhat unceremoniously told his censor, that "*he* must either turn or burn."

During the second year of Mr. Bramwell's labours in this circuit, the additions were not so great, but still the work went on, and the prospects of religion there he considered to be extremely promising. Crowded audiences amply testified that the interest of the people in the preaching of the Gospel continued unabated. Dissension had been completely stifled, and all was peace in the society.

Yet whilst he was running after souls himself, there was one continually pursuing after his own. He states, that he was 'exceedingly followed by Satan and much tempted.' He was involved in incessant warfare, and 'surrounded by the powers of darkness.' The temptations to sloth and fainting, against preaching, praying, and his other duties, he sometimes thought were increasing fast upon him. The very amenities of his position might, he feared, exert a seductive and soporific influence over his spirit. He charges himself with indolence in the midst of all his activity, and declares that he has much difficulty in 'keeping all things going on at full speed.' He never was more ashamed of his services than then. His cruel adversary assailed him with desperate impetuosity. 'Satan' says he, emphatically, 'roars against me,'

but not an inch of ground would he yield; not a muscle would he relax in the good cause. Let the enemy roar as he will, he declares, 'I cannot please him: I cannot submit.' On the contrary, this spiritual persecution only stimulated him to greater exertions, and inspired him with greater loftiness of purpose. At the very time when he states himself to have been encompassed by the powers of darkness, he not only contemplates a successful resistance to their machinations, but employs all means to fit himself to 'live amongst angels—the pure, the holy angels in Heaven!' When the arch-enemy was most clamorous against him, so far from anticipating destruction, he was hoping 'to be with God the Saviour shortly,' and passionately longing to mingle his praises with those of the happy spirits above. Again he writes (January, 1808), 'I am waiting for my change. I can say, I long for it. I have been preaching two funeral sermons this week for two eminent Christians; and my soul at the time received such a view of that glory which they now enjoy, that earth and all things in it were swallowed up in God. I must say, "I now live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I have been for some months labouring to attain to that point—for nothing, for one moment, to divert me from God. The Lord has given me this blessing. I now feel the full effect of that passage, "he dwells in God, and God in him." I live in God. Oh, what views have I in this state! I grieve—but it is in God. I rejoice, but it is in God. I speak, but I find it is in God. I am tempted, but unmoved in God!' Truly, Satan might roar as loud as he liked against a man who thus lived, moved, and had his very being in God!

About this period we find reference made to a work he had composed, and of which he speaks under the appellation of his "Life and Times." Whatever this production might have been, perhaps the only relic which now exists, is a large quarto volume, beautifully bound, and lettered "Bramwell's Life:"—but, alas! the fair pages of this book bear no traces of the masculine penmanship of the individual whose history it was intended to record. The original draft was doubtless consigned to the flames, like the greater part of his manuscripts at some period or other. In Hull, he destroyed a large collection of journals, letters, and other papers, which occupied a series of volumes, amounting to no less a number, perhaps, than forty or fifty. One of his family well remembers the period when this sweeping conflagration took place. On entering the 'study,' as it was called, the first object that attracted his attention was a huge fire, on which were piled

the fragments of these gilded and superbly bound volumes. Even the costly covers had not been spared. The boy had learned to value the manuscripts, for it had often been his employment, more particularly on the Sundays, to dip into their contents, and richly did they reward his curiosity. Treasures, which to many would have been invaluable, had now disappeared. A mass of interesting correspondence, with some of the worthiest ministers of the Wesleyan community, and a still more attractive fund of narrative, anecdote, and personal incident, was there before him—in ashes. He could not but express his grief at this wholesale and inexplicable destruction. He received no reply, but, on looking up, observed on Mr. Bramwell's countenance a smile far more sardonic, perhaps, than had ever traversed it before. It was a smile which conveyed the impression that the latter had been influenced by some dark impulse of no ordinary character, but that doubt or regret was now assuming the ascendancy in his mind. Whatever his motives might have been, it is certain that the feeling to which we have previously adverted, in noticing his 'book of dreams,'—the extraordinary character of the incidents—was one of the most prominent. He thought it of little use to detail marvels which would never be credited. There were, unquestionably, many wonderful stories in these volumes, and as a sample, perhaps, of such, we may give the following, which is vividly remembered by one of his children, who met with it in their curious pages. When Mr. Bramwell was once preaching in the chapel at Birstal, a child was observed to fix its eyes upon some point above the minister's head. They were riveted to that spot during a great portion of the sermon, and with such tenacity, that the parent afterwards inquired what was the reason. "Oh, mother," said the child, "did'nt you see that pretty little angel come in at the window, moving its wings just above the preacher's head:—it was saying, 'come to Jesus; come to Jesus!'"—It was undoubtedly more politic to suppress than to publish such tales as these; but it is certain, that if the manuscripts in question had been preserved, they would have furnished an amount of pleasant information, mingled with religious anecdote and authentic occurrences, which would have immeasurably outbalanced all the objectionable elements. With regard to the autobiography in particular, it will not be too much to say, that had it seen the light, it would have proved no uninteresting specimen of that fascinating species of composition. As a record of spiritual toils and warfare at least, it would have made an exciting volume. Mr. Bramwell certainly

contemplated its publication during his sojourn in Sunderland; for in 1807 we find him consulting one of his correspondents on the subject, adding, however, 'I believe the things contained in it are true; but I fear they are too true to publish.' This remark certainly imports more than the feeling to which we have referred in connexion with his other manuscripts. There is no more nauseous medicine occasionally than the simple truth. The palate can rarely tolerate it in its pure, unadulterated state. If the 'whole truth' of a single month were published, it might probably produce a greater convulsion than the falsehood of a century!

Prayer, however, was more to his taste than book-making, and in this process he continued to display his extraordinary powers. No subject appeared too minute or secular to evade its influences. "Let us pray," was his recipe for every evil. Even in a question of tenancy, we find him laying the case before the Almighty, and pleading for hours on behalf of his client. One night, he and a colleague were the guests of a friend residing in this circuit. The latter was in trouble about the house he occupied; the proprietor required him to quit, which he could not do without sustaining serious inconvenience. Mr. Bramwell took up the matter, and on retiring to the sleeping apartment which he shared with his brother minister, the two applied themselves to supplication, and spent a great part of the night in pleading for the relief of their host. In a few days, circumstances took a turn altogether unexpected; the difficulty was removed, and to those prayers exclusively this favorable result was ascribed.

The impression made upon Mr. Bramwell's feelings by his residence in Sunderland was deep and permanent. Perhaps he never entered any circuit with more pleasure, or left one with more personal regret. From the first he had formed very high expectations respecting it, and these were so far gratified, as to leave little doubt that, if his life had been protracted until infirmities compelled him to abstain from active labour, he would have selected this place as a retreat during the winter season of existence. The kindness he experienced, and the many friendships he contracted, endeared it to him in an especial manner. In the town itself, the courteous demands which were made upon his time were so great, that he could scarcely comply with them. In the vicinity, there were many places where he was ever a welcome guest. Amongst these in particular were Thornhill, with its amiable and polished society, and the sylvan retreat of Hunter's Hall, to which an early morning walk would frequently conduct him

in time to breakfast with the family of Mr. Longridge, whose name, in connexion with Wesleyanism, will be long and deservedly revered. It was no wonder, therefore, that a minister so jealous of his own constancy, and so fearful of everything which might exert a dissipating tendency, learned to distrust himself whilst exposed to such fascinating courtesies. No higher compliment (in a certain sense) could perhaps have been offered in acknowledgment of the kindness of the Sunderland friends, than the fasting, watching, and praying (before mentioned), to which he submitted for the purpose of counteraction and spiritual discipline.

This delightful peril (if we may so call it) was greatly enhanced by a peculiarity in the Wesleyan community at Sunderland. Independently of the avowed *members* of the society, its interests were at that period supported by a number of excellent and highly respectable individuals, who were popularly known under the title of "*half-brethren*." They attended the Wesleyan ministry—subscribed to the Wesleyan funds—attached themselves to the Wesleyan cause—and might be considered as members in every respect but one—they could never cross the Rubicon of the class. The result was, of course, that a kind of secular order was engrafted upon the regularly initiated body, and to the existence of this anomaly the Wesleys were indebted for a degree of influence and temporal solidity which, under ordinary circumstances, they would not have enjoyed. In other respects, too, the brotherhood of the half-blood did no discredit to that of the whole.

Whilst in the Sunderland circuit, Mr. Bramwell had the pleasure of introducing to the ministry, we believe, two individuals, who have fully justified the confidence which he felt in their abilities and future usefulness. These were the Rev. James Everett and the Rev. A. E. Farrar. Mr. Bramwell was always particularly attentive to youthful ministers, and amongst his letters, several will be found which afford excellent advice to the rising members of his profession: many, indeed, who entered the pulpit under his auspices, and many also, who entered it after his decease, acknowledged him not only as a friend but a father in Christ. If the number of his spiritual children who have followed him in the same noble work of proclaiming the Gospel could be accurately ascertained, it would furnish a lengthy and brilliant roll: in proof of this it may be related, that at a missionary meeting in the north of England, at which a son of his presided, several of the preachers who were fortuitously assembled

on the platform, successively declared that they had been converts under Mr. Bramwell.*

In the latter year of his journey in Sunderland, he had Dr. Henry Taft for a colleague. This zealous and devoted minister was at that time a widower, and having but one child, he made arrangements with his intimate friend and superintendent for residing under his roof. "Mr. Bramwell," says Dr. M'Callum in his memoir of Dr. Taft, "had become acquainted with him at an early and interesting period of his Christian experience. He had been an instrument in confirming his faith, instructing and guiding his zeal; he had been a comforter to him when he lost the wife of his youth; he had encouraged and advised him on occasion of his becoming an itinerant; and now he was to receive him as an inmate and a son in the Gospel." The friendship which subsisted between them was consequently great and cordial. "Each valued in the other," continues the biographer, "those excellencies which each cultivated in himself. They were both men of prayer, both warmly interested in the prosperity of Zion, both distinguished from most other men by a peculiar simplicity of character and ardour of zeal; and although each had excellencies peculiar to himself, these were less remarkable than those which were common to both; and were only so many points of relief and prominence which the better fitted them for each other." It is, therefore, scarcely necessary to say that two such congenial spirits wrought well in combination. "The doctor was a faithful fellow-labourer with Mr. Bramwell, and Mr. Bramwell was a friend and father to him. The Redeemer's kingdom was extended, and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands."†

The paternal influence which Mr. Bramwell exercised over his more youthful associate was alike honorable to both. A word, or even a look, was sufficient to manifest the gentle authority of the one, and to secure the affectionate acquiescence of the other. Perhaps the value of this amiable relationship was never exhibited more decisively than in reference to the following incident:—The doctor, being then a widower, had determined to re-enter the matrimonial state, so soon as he could find a suitable partner. Like many other persons, who think that the attributes of a good wife are capable of a

* The same remark applies to many other meetings of a similar description. At one of these, a venerable minister (now deceased), addressing the chairman, said, "If you, sir, are your father's *natural* child, I am his *spiritual* child!" The claim to spiritual paternity in such a case as that of the Rev. Mr. Walsley, was one which would have done honour to any man.

† Dr. M'Callum's Memoir of Dr. Taft, p. 101.

scientific analysis, and that a certain admixture of qualities is indispensable in the fair object, the doctor had been at some pains to ascertain the true constituents of a perfect helpmate. He had drawn out an inventory of these on paper: they were the only terms on which he could negotiate with the softer sex—the basis of any treaty of alliance to be entered into with any of its members. Returning home from duty one night, he had the misfortune to lose his pocket-book, which contained, amongst much spiritual matter, the more secular document in question. His grief was excessive. Although the night was extremely dark, he procured a lantern, and retraced his steps through the mud, searching on every side for the missing treasure—in vain. The book had been picked up by an individual, who not only read the contents, but unhandsofly divulged the particulars of the above matrimonial document. The doctor soon heard of the proceeding. He was justly incensed at the conduct of the finder, and his feelings were so far excited, that he would almost have visited him with personal retribution. Mr. Bramwell, however, came to the rescue, and, by a little kindly argument, speedily soothed the doctor's exasperation, and restored him to his ordinary composure. The incident had no injurious effect upon his fortunes, for he shortly met with and married an amiable lady, who did honour to his judgment.

A stay of two years in Sunderland completed Mr. Bramwell's ministry there. His next remove (1808) was to Liverpool—the place from which, thirty-three years ago, he had fled with horror as from the city of destruction. He returned to it now under different feelings and different auspices. Before, he regarded it as one of Satan's chief depôts—a very emporium of wickedness—and whilst in it, trembled for his safety under the overwhelming influences of the Evil One. Now he rejoiced in Almighty protection: he carried with him the 'heaven of God's presence;' he traversed its streets as a mailed warrior of the cross, clothed in armour of celestial fabric. Protected by this Divine panoply, he could face any peril, or grapple with any opponent. Places, he says, were less than ever to him. If he could only find 'devoted souls, friends dwelling in God,' around him, and heaven above him, no matter what was beneath or beyond. Satan could not now frighten him away: he had got accustomed to the 'roaring' of the lion, and to the clamours of his spiritual adversaries. 'Here,' he says, exultingly, 'the noise of self, of the world, of the devil is over.' He did not care for it now, where formerly his ears had tingled with the dreaded sounds.

The spherical music ravished his soul, and swept away all Satanic discords in its exquisite melody. Amidst the turbulence without, he states that 'all is calm within: the eye is fixed, the soul established, the tongue loosed, and all in the spirit.'

In this temper he prosecuted his ministry in Liverpool. He found the society in a state which he considered by no means flourishing, and was grieved by the reduction of its numbers to the extent of one hundred during the first quarter. This loss, however, was more than repaid by the increase of the ensuing term; one hundred and thirty members were then initiated: he saw many 'saved who had lost their confidence, and several times witnessed in public a shaking among the people.' 'Altogether, the work,' he says, 'has very much revived this quarter.' But neither conversions nor additions could content the indefatigable pastor. He seems to say to his flock, 'You may be converted; you may be members; you may meet in your classes; you may stand forth as accepted Christians—but there is something beyond all this: have you the blessing of *entire sanctification*? If not, you are still novices in religion; and your "experience," comprehensive as you may think it, wholly omits the chief and crowning grace of all.' Everywhere he was prying into the hearts of the disciples to discover, if possible, the welcome signs of this sanctification. 'At first,' he says, 'I could find very few who retained the blessing. That appeared to have been given up for some years: but a number have lately been brought into the glorious liberty.' He could not permit his favorite doctrine to be impugned in any way. He writes to Mr. Sigston about an 'idea' then in circulation, 'that when we are justified we are entirely sanctified,' and indignantly denounces it as the 'devil's great gun.' Of course, he did his best to spike this formidable piece of Satanic artillery: but, says he, despondingly, 'we shall have much trouble with it, and I am afraid we cannot suppress it.'

During the two years of his ministry in Liverpool, he toiled with unabated enthusiasm. According to his statement, he was never more concerned about his work: he never preached, as he thought, with so much power; he never wept and entreated so much; he never denounced iniquity with so much sternness, for his peculiar sensitiveness to the vices of a large seaport, led him to attack them with unwonted plainness, and in so doing occasionally to transcend the proper boundaries of delicacy; but still the results were (to him at least) quite insufficient: he never saw less 'general effect'

from his exertions. Yet during these two years, the numerical value of the Liverpool societies—a very different thing, it may be, from the real spiritual census—had been augmented by at least five hundred members.

He was supported in his labours by colleagues, whose names have become thoroughly Wesleyan. In 1808-9, himself being superintendent, he had for associates the Reverend Messrs. Theophilus Lessey, senior, Thomas Wood, and Valentine Ward; in the following year, the Reverend Messrs. James Bogie, T. Lessey, and Jabez Bunting.

One of these gentlemen, Mr. Ward, writes thus respecting him:—“Nothing is more common than for erroneous opinion to be formed of celebrated men. Accordingly, I had involuntarily formed disadvantageous prepossessions concerning our departed friend, which a short acquaintance entirely removed. In the first place, I expected to find him a snarling cynic, a morose disturber of Christian cheerfulness, and an interrupter of the most innocent conversation which did not happen to accord with his own views. But what was he in fact? The happy man,—the kind, tender-hearted friend,—attentive to every person about him,—and, if more attentive to one than to another, it was to the young, or to any who were in danger of being overlooked. He was sufficiently severe to himself, but indulgent to others.

“Another particular in which I found myself mistaken concerning him, was his conscientiously strict and firm adherence to discipline. The language of my fears, grounded on vague report, was, that however excellent he might be as a preacher, he would be very unfit to govern a large society, and that his management of discussions, and his decisions in our various official meetings, would be guided more by his own feelings, than by rule. But never was any man’s conduct more opposed to such a theory. ‘Thus saith the law,’ was his constant observation; ‘We must not, will not go contrary to our rules.’ And I am sure the conviction of his own mind was, that this is the most excellent way.”

Before Mr. Bramwell left Liverpool, he gave proof that the singular facility of communication with Heaven, which to some appeared like a kind of second sight, had not been lost. A member of the society—a young woman—was leaving this country for Jamaica, in order to join her friends in that island. She called upon Mr. Bramwell to take leave, and solicit his prayers on her behalf. He knelt down accordingly with her, and after pleading for some time, there was a sudden pause—a whisper from Heaven for his ear alone! “My dear sister,”

said the minister, rising, and addressing her abruptly, "you must not go to-morrow : God has just told me you must not go !" The dear sister was of course surprised by this injunction : the next morning she was to sail ; the passage was taken, and her luggage already on board. But the man of prayer was urgent : she must *not* go, in the teeth of such an embargo :—Heaven forbid ! He succeeded : the luggage was immediately removed, and the vessel sailed without her. In a few weeks afterwards, they learned that this ill-fated barque lay buried in the salt depths of the ocean, and that every soul it had carried was engulfed in the mightier abyss of eternity !

In 1810, his friends in Sheffield entreated Conference to appoint him to that circuit again. Thither he went accordingly, and prosecuted his labours upon ground already hallowed to him by many a religious triumph. His return was welcomed by scores, who ascribed to his services the most valuable of their impressions ; and by many who had profited too much under his former ministry to forget their spiritual benefactor. But where were the others ? Had any made shipwreck of faith ? Had any escaped from the storms and surges of life's tempestuous sea, and gained the haven of eternal peace ? Above all, had any abandoned their hopes, and fallen miserable victims to the wrath of the Destroyer ? We can imagine with what trembling solicitude the preacher would pursue this inquisition ; with what pleasure he would find converts changed into mature believers ; with what exultation he would hear of the final perseverance and triumphant departure of others, whose religious growth he had formerly aided and superintended. And should any unhappy soul—a brand once snatched with his own fingers from the burning—have sunk, after all, into the devouring Tophet—ah, there was no thought could tear the heart of William Bramwell like that ! It was grief enough for him that Satan should seize his thousands as he did ; but to observe the Evil One seize those who had once escaped from his grasp, and once found protection beneath the Almighty wings, was torture unspeakable !

The Sheffield friends found that their pastor had lost none of the energy and enthusiasm which distinguished his former ministry amongst them. His sermons were as impressive as ever ; his prayers as powerful ; his zeal as indefatigable. At five o'clock in the morning he was to be found at the meetings, which were held at that hour, and on these occasions he saw many a penitent delivered from sin, and many a believer

quicken and edify. As superintendent, he had necessarily to give much of his attention to the more secular duties of a Wesleyan minister—and some of them, perhaps, are too secular to admit of that entire dedication of soul to the sublime purposes of the office which is desirable—but still they were vigilantly discharged, and without interrupting the more sacred business of his calling, or distracting his mind in its absorbing work of preparation for Heaven. He did much also to calm the contentions which might yet survive in the societies. “The dissensions which he found amongst us,” says a member, “vanished when we profited by his ministry and drank into his spirit. The selfish contraction of our hearts was expanded by the influence of his example, and we became as members of one family, sitting under the same vine and fig-tree, and enjoying uninterrupted peace and prosperity.” These were Arcadian days, it seems, for Sheffield! If one sinner can do much evil, truly one saint can do much good! The ‘spirit’ of this man poured upon the society, calmed its agitations, like oil upon the waves, and cemented the jarring elements into a compact and harmonious brotherhood!

At the same time that his public exertions were so great, his private ones were incessant, and, if possible, still more energetic. “I feel,” says he, “as if I could do nothing but pray.” Instead of imagining that he might now relax his importunities, he declares that he never saw so much need of continual prayer. “I do assure you, I find it necessary to begin at five in the morning, and pray at all opportunities till ten or eleven at night.” Indeed, his scheme appears to have been nothing less than the expenditure of all his time and all his soul in prayer. No wonder that such a persevering suitor should so often prevail; he had wrestled so frequently with the Angel, that he had become an accomplished athlete, and neither break of day nor fall of night could terminate his struggles for the blessings he required. Numerous cases of successful intercession are related of this period also. One, which seems well attested, refers to Sergeant-Major Thomas Riley, of the Dragoon Guards,—a man well known and highly esteemed amongst the societies for his services in the pulpit. In his capacity of a spiritual warrior, he was accustomed to preach occasionally, and with such effect, that the chapels were always thronged. The spectacle itself must have been extremely curious; for it was his practice to officiate in uniform, and being a man of lofty stature and herculean strength, his appearance in the pulpit, where so few of his profession have ever been seen, was productive of no slight

interest. In his capacity of temporal warrior, however, he was ordered to proceed to Spain with his regiment, then stationed at Sheffield. The soldier was troubled at the idea of a speedy, and perhaps final, separation from his wife and four children, and the good woman, on her part, was overwhelmed with grief at her approaching bereavement. Mr. Bramwell, who knew them well, and who offered his ready sympathies in this hour of distress, thought it possible that the orders of government might be neutralized by the interposition of God. To assist Riley, he applied to Heaven instead of the Horse Guards. After many supplications, from day to day, he met the soldier and his wife at the house of a friend. It was the last night of Riley's stay; the next morning his regiment was to march, and the next month his corpse might probably be stretched on some of the bloody battle-fields of the Peninsula. Mr. Bramwell sat abstractedly for a while—struggling apparently with some inward perplexity. He could obtain no satisfactory answer to his entreaties! "But after supper was over," says the gallant soldier, "he suddenly pulled his hand out of his bosom, laid it on my knee, looked me in the face, and said, 'brother Riley, mark what I am about to say: you are *not* to go to Spain!' 'But the marching orders?' 'Never mind: remember, I tell you, you are not; for I have been wrestling with God on your behalf, and when my Heavenly Father condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold on himself, I do not easily let him go; no, not until I am favoured with an answer. Therefore, depend upon it, that the next time I hear from you, you will be settled in quarters.'" The next morning, however, Riley's regiment left Sheffield, with Spain for its prescribed destination; but he had not proceeded far before he learned that the order had been countermanded; it was *not* to go to Spain! The next time Mr. Bramwell heard from the soldier, it was to say that the latter was "settled in quarters," on English ground, as predicted. How far the national authorities (had they known of the proceeding, and given it the slightest credit) would have relished the remote interference of a lowly Wesleyan minister with their marching orders, even by the pious instrumentality of prayer, it is difficult to say. They might probably have thought it a kind of treason.

During his second sojourn in Sheffield, Mr. Bramwell renewed his personal intimacy with Mr. Henry Longden. The friendship subsisting between them was one of no superficial description. It was founded upon reciprocal esteem and admiration, and cemented by the warmest sympathies which

can bind one Christian to another. There was not only a great similarity in many points of character, but such an identity of purpose, taste, views, and pursuits, that we may safely regard them as brethren in soul, if not in blood. They were enlisted under the same banner—engaged in the same enterprise—fired by the same holy ambition—bent upon the same noble ends—and in their services to the church, as well as in their ministerial successes, exhibited a beautiful and brilliant analogy. There was the same passion for souls—the same lofty zeal in their pursuit—the same concentration of energy in the noble work of Christian conquest. Perhaps the two never felt greater satisfaction, than when they went into battle side by side, and the shout of the one was echoed from the lips of the other. Two mighty champions were they in war: like David and Jonathan in peace!

If separately they were powerful and impressive, in conjunction they were well-nigh irresistible. During the great spiritual movement in Nottingham, when both were visiting that place, they were invited one day to meet a number of the most influential persons amongst the religious classes in the town. They were unwilling to lose any time in light or common-place conversation, and it therefore became a question with them, on their way to the house, how they should proceed, in order to give the most serious character to the party. Like good generals, they saw that whatever plan was to be adopted, it must be put in operation with the greatest promptitude, and the impression made at the very outset. They determined upon a simple but eccentric expedient. The first that entered the room was to kneel down behind the door, and the other was to follow his example! On their arrival, they were ushered into a large apartment, occupied by a considerable number of persons. The leader immediately knelt down as arranged; the other did so by his side: not a word was uttered aloud by either of them—it was unnecessary. Under ordinary circumstances, such a proceeding would have been disapproved, but those were days of great excitement for Nottingham, and the company assembled was one of too religious a character to take offence at the conduct of the visitors. At any rate, this little devotional performance produced the desired effect; it gave a holy impulse to the party, and converted the house of entertainment into one of prayer and supplication.

In Mr. Longden's journal we have some brief references to their joint excursions, such as the following:—"June 12, Mr. Bramwell and I have been fourteen days at Nottingham.

The hand of the Lord was with us ; many believed and were saved—some from the guilt, and others from the dominion, of sin.”—“July 26. I have been with Mr. Bramwell a week into the Derbyshire part of the circuit. This servant of God is owned and succeeded of God wherever he goes. I have been drinking larger draughts of the love of God.”

Mr. Longden did not (like his friend) make the ministry his profession, but he was not less active in his capacity of lay preacher, and in the discharge of his other duties as a member of the church of Christ. For two and thirty years he laboured in the former character, with a dauntless spirit, which carried him triumphantly through the many difficulties and annoyances incident to such a vocation at that period, and particularly at the commencement of his Christian career. This he did too, although, as a man of worldly substance and high respectability, the office was less to be coveted, and the toil more to be dreaded. His efforts were not in vain. Respecting his success, Mr. Bramwell observed, and in language which has been applied with little variation to his own exertions, “I never yet followed a person whose ministerial labours were attended with such abundance of fruit. I believe that hundreds of his children, whom he had begotten through the Gospel would welcome him into glory, and that hundreds more are following after him.”

The personal intercourse, however, of the two friends was soon interrupted—though only for a while—by the death of Mr. Longden. On Mr. Bramwell’s return to Sheffield, Mr. Longden told him that he had come to perform the last office of friendship—to attend him to the brink of the river, to commit his mortal remains to the grave, and then to “improve the circumstances of his life and death to the living.” So it happened. In February, 1812, the “messenger of the Lord” entered the chamber of the good man, and conducted him to his eternal home. The surviving friend saw his relics committed to the ground, amidst such a crowd as he had never observed on any similar occasion. His regret was not so much that a Christian comrade was gone, as that *he* had not accompanied him. ‘Oh, that I had died with him!’ was his cry; and surely, if these companions in Christ could have forded the river hand in hand, the bliss of death would have been sweetly enhanced. Mr. Bramwell preached the funeral sermon, in which he paid an affectionate tribute to the worth and character of his departed friend.*

* We are glad to find that a new and improved memoir of this noble individual has been recently prepared by his worthy son and successor, Henry Longden, Esq.

It is not often that a minister finds so honorable a theme for a funeral address as Mr. Bramwell did on this occasion. He met with very different cases in the course of his career. He was once requested, whilst in this neighbourhood, to deliver a discourse of the same description upon an individual who, it was well known, had not proved an ornament to the Christian profession. He declined, on the ground that he did not think the deceased had a proper claim to these melancholy honours. The application, however, was urged with so much importunity, that Mr. Bramwell at last submitted, upon condition that he might say what his own sense of justice suggested, and the character of the individual really demanded. No objection could, of course, be made to so reasonable a stipulation, and a day was therefore appointed. A gentleman who knew the deceased, and who had formed a very low estimate of his Christian character, declared that he would go to the Wesleyan chapel (although by no means accustomed to attend) on this particular occasion, in order "to hear what *lies* they would tell on the subject." He went accordingly, fully prepared to hear the defunct canonized. Mr. Bramwell, in his usual solemn manner, descanted for a considerable time upon death and judgment, and when it became necessary to advert to the immediate object for which they were assembled, he briefly declared, that "if the deceased had just got behind the door of Heaven, it was *all* he expected!" The gentleman was deeply impressed by the honesty and intrepid veracity of the minister, and asserted that there was one man, at least, who dared to speak the truth without fear or favour.

In some other cases he expressed himself with still greater daring, and now and then, in a manner which was scarcely within the orthodox limits of decorum. It would not be proper to repeat the rebukes which he administered in public on one occasion, when preaching before a female benefit society; they were uttered in language so plain and uncompromising, that some of his hearers were covered with confusion. In a few instances, his zeal, on the one hand, and his fearless honesty, on the other, certainly conspired to lead him astray in such matters. If, however, he could effect his purpose—and it was always an honorable and unselfish one—by gentler expedients, he was glad to employ them in preference. When, therefore, he found, we will say a print or picture, which he thought absurd or improper, hung up in a friend's house, he gave him a silent, but sufficient reproof, by turning its front to the wall.



CHAPTER V.

A DAY WITH HIM—Matins—Ghostly Combats—Diet—Spiritual Epicurism—Studies—Pastoral Visits—The Tea-table—Conversation—The Pulpit—Personal Description—Agitation—Prayer—Sermon—Preaching for Souls—The Thunders of the Law—From Sinai to Calvary—Now—Effects on Audience—Excitement—His Tactics—Energetic Preaching—Earlier Wesleyan Evangelists—Views on Preaching—Domestic Life—His Children—System of Education—Midnight Risings.

His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear,
By him the violated law speaks out
It's thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains by ev'ry rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war
The sacramental host of God's elect!

COWPER.



E have thus far traced the career of this devoted apostle: let us now insulate a portion or fragment, in order that we may examine it in microscopic detail. The general outline of a man's existence may be sufficiently smooth and rounded to please the eye, whilst its individual parts may be unpleasantly rugged—just as our globe presents a perfect shape in its entirety, although every degree of its surface is crowded with irregularities. The memoir of a life is one thing—the memoir of a day quite another. We never can be said to know a person until we have followed him to his own hearth—seen him in *deshabille*—heard him talking amidst his family—and watched his proceedings, when a petty act or a passing word discloses the character more truly than months of public exhibition may do. This, too, is a test which has no more decided application than in cases of religious pretension: the privacy of a single day is too much for the hypocrite; he cannot sit quietly in his arm-chair until his masquerading habit is doffed.

Was Mr. Bramwell, then, as pious and devoted in private as he appeared to be in public? Did each day bear an adequate resemblance to his whole life, and every part of his conduct harmonise with his general career?—In order that these questions may be answered, let us spend a single day with him.*

At four o'clock in summer—in winter at five—Mr. Bramwell had risen from his bed. The latest thought of the preceding evening was God; the first of the present morn was God also. As naturally as the needle points to the pole, when released from temporary constraint, that soul adjusted itself in a moment, when roused from slumber, and whatever direction it took, the great magnet was sure to be there. His earliest business was, of course, transacted with his Maker. Before he could venture to deal with earth, his spirit must wing its way upwards, and sun itself in the pure, dazzling radiance of the Throne. "I like," he would say, "to have my soul filled with God in the morning, and then I am in the spirit all the day." And for a soul of such capacity, no stinted allowance would suffice; its cravings could only be satisfied when it was filled to overflowing with the choicest supplies from the fountain of light. But it was not for himself alone that he pleaded. He began there; he was determined that his own heart should be first replenished; but when this was done he sought the same blessing for others. Foremost on his praying-list (if it may be so termed) was his wife. "God bless Ellen" was the burden of a long and affectionate petition. Next came the children, then his colleagues in the ministry, and afterwards the circuit—every place in which he would sometimes name in succession. "If in any class there were untoward circumstances existing, he would refer to the class, the leader, and the untoward person. He then brought the connexion at large before God, both preachers and people."† But it frequently happened that there was a number of private individuals, whose peculiar circumstances led them to solicit the minister's especial interference on their behalf. Notes were often handed him from such, and their cases were duly submitted to Heaven by a pleader whose powerful advocacy was largely acknowledged. It was then, said one, when closeted with the King of Kings that he had the varied states of people unveiled to him in a manner the most remarkable;

* It need scarcely be said that the following account, though not a *literal* transcript of the proceedings of any given day, is compounded of materials actually drawn from life, and therefore affords, at least, a faint glimpse of the man. The arrangement of circumstances is, of course, in some degree arbitrary.

† Rev. John Kershaw.

and thus he could enter most minutely into their feelings, and administer the 'word in season.' But his supplications did not terminate until the world—the whole world—had been grasped in prayer; and if ever mortal pleaded earnestly for its conversion, William Bramwell was the man. Hours might thus be spent on his knees; and if, as the Mahometans say, early and earnest prayer is one of three things which God always hears, then there was scarcely a morning on which he failed to win the ear of the Almighty. Without fiction, indeed, we may well suppose that the matin supplications of the good man are peculiarly acceptable to the ever-wakeful Lord of creation, amidst the comparative silence of a slumbering hemisphere.

At length he rose from his knees. Perhaps, by the time he had concluded, some of the poorer members of his flock arrived to consult him on questions affecting their interests, either in a religious or temporal point of view. Their cases were carefully considered; advice was given or assistance afforded, according to the best of his ability. Or it might be, that there was a public prayer-meeting that morning; and if so, he was soon found on his knees again, mingling his petitions with those of a few other pious individuals, and pleading as if his private exercises had only stimulated, not impaired, his spiritual appetite. If no such meeting was appointed, he retired to his humble 'study' and sat himself down to read. The book was, of course, that famous production which boasts Divine authorship.* Chapter after chapter was read with as much interest as if it were a new composition, instead of an ancient volume, whose every line was familiar to his memory. At intervals, perhaps, he would fall on his knees again, and pray most fervently that this spiritual food might be inwardly digested. In these exercises he would find sweet occupation until the hour of breakfast arrived; and

* The *dedication* always excepted. The doctrine of plenary inspiration is manifestly inapplicable to the prefatory Epistle to James. Is it not high time that this discreditable preamble should be banished from the authorised version of the Scriptures? The association of Jehovah's precepts with James's praises is, at the best, a very incongruous and, some may think, a very irreverent proceeding. It might suit the palate of the seventeenth century, but it can only disgust that of the nineteenth. It is, however, curious to remark that the 'British Solomon' had the good fortune to receive two compliments of a singularly piquant character, and the more so, because they emanated from sources widely different. On the one hand, the revelation from heaven, in its English version, was dedicated to his Majesty, and placed under his especial patronage;—on the other, he had the satisfaction of hearing from some of the witches whose trials he superintended, that Satan had spoken of him in the most flattering terms—had styled him (*par excellence*) "*un homme de Dieu*," and declared that the 'dread sovereign' was the *greatest enemy* he had upon earth! James was delighted with this diabolical tribute to his merits—far more so, indeed, than with the epistle dedicatory. If the report could have been depended upon—but the witches were cunning courtiers—it might have gone far to justify the hope expressed by the venerable translators, that his Majesty would become "the wonder of the world," in that "latter age."

long before the body was supplied with nourishment, the soul had feasted on the manna of Heaven, and been "filled with the fulness of God."

There might, however, happen to be some fierce struggle with Satan:—a battle to be fought—a temptation to be resisted—an assault to be repelled. The enemy, perhaps, came in upon him like a flood: the 'roaring lion' seemed to have broken his chain; the powers of darkness beset him on every side. He met them, however, on his knees; he encountered them with prayer. The combat might be desperate. His voice grew louder, until it penetrated to the adjoining rooms, and roused the inmates from their sleep. The body shared in the agitation of the mind; and his brow would soon drop with perspiration. But patience and importunity would eventually carry the day; the foe, baffled in his onset, would retire from the field, and leave the warrior unconquered and unscathed. Yet, as the latter seated himself at the breakfast table, the excited countenance and glistening hair spoke eloquently of the conflict he had sustained, whilst the sparkling eye announced not less surely the victory he had achieved.

The meal of the morning was frugal indeed. It was scarcely more than a hermit's fare. In kind, his diet was always the plainest, and in quantity, the scantiest. The pleasures of the table were not for him. He would eat to the full of the bread of life, but cared little for the bread that perisheth. Where the soul could banquet, he was always a delighted guest: where the body alone, he was rarely to be found. In spiritual feasting, he might be an epicure; in corporeal, he was an anchorite. In earlier life, his ordinary food was bread and vegetables—

"Earth's coarsest bread; the garden's humblest roots."

At all times animal food was sparingly used, and at one period he renounced it entirely for half a year; spirituous liquors were also eschewed, except for medicinal purposes; and one dish at a meal was generally the principle by which his diet was regulated. Twice a week he imposed a fast upon himself. Perhaps on this subject his views were somewhat cynical:—at any rate, he saw much danger in the ordinary indulgences of the table, and resorted to 'watching and fasting' (as previously stated), to prevent his being 'ruined with good things!' Throughout life, he made it a principle to curb his appetite, and desist some time before its cravings were fully appeased. His object was to "keep his body under—just to

live, so as to be able to work." He entertained very great dread of corpulence, and fearing a tendency of this kind in his own person, he practised "the lean and sallow abstinence," not only as an instrument of spiritual discipline, but of bodily restraint. He was also not unwilling to insinuate a tacit reproof, where he thought that too much attention was paid to the palate, by declining to partake of an attractive dish, although, perhaps, it might have been expressly prepared for his entertainment. Under the hope that he was discountenancing what he deemed luxurious living, he had no objection to exhibit his own abstemious practice as the gentlest, perhaps not the politest, antidote to the evil.

The morning, or so much of it as he could spare from the subordinate duties of his calling, was employed in study, meditation, and prayer. Part of it might probably be occupied in filling the pages of a journal, a considerable portion of which, it is said, for some reason or other, was written in the picturesque but laborious characters of the Hebrew Scriptures.* He was extremely fond of books, though his resources were too scanty to admit of many purchases, and the frequent changes of place which a Wesleyan minister must undergo forbid the accumulation of an extensive stock. In their bindings, however, he would not scruple to gratify a somewhat luxurious though substantial taste. It is needless to say that his library was chosen for use, and that the Book of Books formed the basis—we may also add, the top-stone—of his collection: the others were more or less valuable, as they expounded or illustrated, resembled or revered, the matchless volume of revelation.

Every study was, of course, accompanied by prayer. Whatever the subject, it was interrupted by frequent ejaculations, and occasionally suspended for a time, whilst the preacher fell on his knees to resist a headlong charge of his great adversary, or did battle with the powers of darkness, which swarmed around him. Prayer with him was literally what Luther wished it to be—the better half of study. Thus the morning would pass away, if the more secular business of his calling did not claim his attention, or his official services were not otherwise required.

The afternoon was employed as much as possible in visiting

* Such is the statement made in Mr. Sigston's memoirs, but on what authority, we know not. It is scarcely to be supposed that any man would voluntarily undertake the drudgery of journalizing in so antique and to some a character, as that of the Pentateuch—nor even in the more rapid and abbreviated form employed by the Rabbins. It is more likely, that the mysterious writing in question was a species of short-hand which Mr. Brauwel practised, and which, under his bold and substantial penmanship, might easily be referred to the Jewish dispensation.

the sick, exhorting the believer, or warning the transgressor. Suppose it a suffering or enfeebled member of the flock to whom he repaired. With what feeling he would address his charge, and expound the sacred and masterly philosophy of sorrow:—the Almighty love which shrouds itself in the mysteries of pain, and heaps its chastisements upon its dearest children—which works out and wins for them, by means of earthly afflictions, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—which leads them through fire and water, through the furnace and the floods, that at last it may bring them into the wealthy place! Even the lightest of ills could enlist his sympathies, and furnish a theme for consolation and encouragement. Visiting one day an aged Christian, who had already overstepped the ordinary span of human existence, he found her in grief, because she could no longer sing the songs of the earthly Zion, as she had formerly delighted to do. Her voice was failing—her harp must thenceforth be hung upon the willows! The pastor bid her be of good cheer, and told her that soon she would sing the songs of the heavenly Zion; he spoke of the celestial symphonies to which she would shortly be an enraptured listener, and of the pealing hallelujahs, in which her voice would be heard amidst the voices of angels and archangels. Nor did he speak in vain: the tears which fell from her eyes were tears of pleasure; her sorrow was turned into joy, for this present deprivation was but the prelude to an eternity of song!—Or suppose him standing by the bed of a dying Christian. With what gentleness he discourses on the consolations of religion—with what ardour, of the conquests achieved over death and the grave! He points to the crown, and bids the expiring warrior seize the golden prize. He stimulates him for the last sharp conflict, and rallies his courage for an encounter, which must terminate in victory and everlasting blessedness. And whilst the preacher talks or prays, the wan countenance of the sufferer kindles with holy animation; the glazing eye lights up with more than earthly brilliancy, as if it had already caught and reflected the sunshine of heaven.—Or suppose it a hardened rebel that he accosted. He was quite another man! Fixing his penetrating eye upon the reprobate, he appeared to read his inmost thoughts: with an unsparing hand he probed the corrupted, festering heart to its very core. Then the sinner beheld his vices dragged to the light, and heard them sternly denounced. He learned that the anger of the righteous Lord against him was increasing daily—that every offence was a drop added to the vials of the wrath of God—and that soon their burning

contents might be poured upon his head! What could he expect? If he continued to serve Satan, what wages would he receive but those of sin, which is death? If he sowed the wind, what could he reap but the whirlwind? Perhaps the axe was already uplifted to smite him—those vials might now be full to the brim: another sin—and it might possibly bring down upon him all the fury of an offended judge! And could he think of a death without hope—a sentence without appeal—a punishment without relief—a hell without release—and brave them all for a transitory and delusive joy? No, by the vengeance of the Lord—by the mercies of the Saviour—he must escape for his life!—The reprobate would listen like one fascinated, whilst the preacher “held him with his glittering eye,” and if there was no obvious or immediate change, still he would leave his presence “a wiser and a sadder man.”

Nor was the humblest part of his own flock neglected in these visits; the very meanest were cheerfully attended, whenever his assistance or intercessions were required. Everywhere he strove to make the acquaintance of the members, and particularly to converse with those who were wavering in their piety, or had already wandered in spirit from the fold. And though these pastoral visits were necessarily short, they were always solemn and impressive. Without hesitation or circumlocution, he would address himself to the spiritual concerns of the family: the whole household was summoned, if possible; each individual questioned or counselled, and the inquiry terminated with a prayer, in which all were specially named. The servants even were not forgotten: their souls were as immortal as their master's, and their salvation not less important. To one who valued everything by a standard, of which life, death, time, eternity, heaven and hell, were the most prominent elements, conventional distinctions were of comparatively little moment.

There might perhaps be some who deemed these domiciliary visits a little too inquisitorial; but the earnestness and sincerity displayed in the performance of the delicate task, extinguished every doubt as to the purity of motive with which it was undertaken. There were many also who profited not only in mind, but in pocket. The poor of the flock partook of his temporal substance as well as of his spiritual resources; much of his income was thus distributed, and if he could only afford to bestow an old coat, or an old hat, he could elevate this simple gift into a munificent donation, by bestowing it upon a disciple of Christ, in the name of his Master.

These visits concluded, he would perhaps proceed to some house where he had been invited to take tea. It was not, however, for mere entertainment—not even for relaxation—that he did so; but because he deemed it a pastoral duty to hold the most friendly intercourse with the members of his flock, and the supporters of religious interests. One whose thoughts were habitually fastened upon subjects of such solemn significance, and whose soul was so little attached to mere temporalities, might not be expected to prove the most amusing of guests. The playful humour*—the pleasing banter—the light currency of the table or the fireside, which give such a zest to social commerce, were not looked for in one who dealt so largely in the ponderous verities of religion. He had little of the small coin with which the ordinary business of society is transacted; he traded in spiritual bullion. Yet the subtle—we had almost said sanctifying—influence which he exercised over a company, was remarkable. His very method of “asking a blessing,” says one, “was as solemn as if he had been administering the sacrament.” However strongly the stream of conversation might flow, it soon received a check, or sustained a diversion. The exuberance of mirth was tamed, the frivolous remark was delicately rebuked; petty gossip was adroitly suppressed, and unprofitable discussions entirely banished. Not a word of calumny or censoriousness, whilst that man was in the company! The least injurious allusion to any absent individual was promptly repelled. ‘We cannot mend him,’ he would say, ‘by talking about him here:’ there was a better method of dealing with the case—‘let us *pray* for him.’ And such was his abhorrence of detraction, that he has been known to rise from his chair, and protest that he would retire unless the conversation was abandoned. Under his control, the most volatile discourse soon assumed a serious complexion. The froth—the bubbles—the little whirling eddies speedily disappeared, and the stream flowed on in a spacious channel, with a solemn sweep

* Occasionally, however, Mr. Bramwell could indulge in a little cheerful humour, when there was a good purpose to be answered. Mrs. Bramwell and himself were once invited to take tea with a lady and some friends. The hostess was addicted to a virtue which she would call economy, but which others took the liberty of designating ‘meanness.’—The preacher, knowing this, thought it might be profitable to administer a delicate rebuke. “Ellen,” said he to his wife, before they set out, “take care, and eat as much as ever you can.” Seated at the table, Mr. Bramwell’s appetite seemed to acquire unusual strength, and performed wonders. Those who knew his abstemious habits were surprised at his doings. His customary reserve also disappeared; he was all attention to the wants of his neighbours, and indefatigable in supplying them with provisions. The plates and cups were kept in constant motion, whilst the poor hostess was compelled to look on and see her table sacked, without the power or privilege of remonstrance.—Not the least humorous part of the proceeding was the edifying gravity with which it was conducted by the pastor.

and unruffled surface. Some religious topic was introduced—not for mere dry discussion, but for profound and serious consideration. He would make inquiries into the state of his companions' souls, and draw from them whatever details they could afford as to their spiritual achievements and Christian progress. If anything were said which threatened to divert the discourse into any other than a religious channel, it was immediately checked. "Now," he would exclaim, "we are wandering from the point;" and straightway returned to the important topics in which he strove to interest and engage them. Perhaps the solemn subject of death might be introduced—strange subject for a tea-table! Were they all ready? If the abhorred monster should knock at the door, and summon a victim out of that very room, what would he say? Would it be—"take Bramwell: I am not ready?"—Thus he would lead them on, until the ordinary converse of a social party was completely purified, and in a short time, it might happen that all present were on their knees, praying one after another, as if they had met at the communion—instead of the tea-table.* And occasionally these domestic supplications were attended with the happiest results: many a believer has been edified, and, more than once, sinners have been converted.

Of course such proceedings as these would not be relished by every one; and even very good men might consider themselves defrauded of social pleasures by the exclusive predominance of religious topics. Others, less pious, might murmur at attempts to coerce them into Christian conversation. But the mingled courtesy and dignity with which the preacher conducted himself—his acknowledged but unaffected piety—his obvious solicitude for the eternal welfare of others—and his manifest devotion to the duties of his calling, won for him the respect and admiration of most, at least, of his auditors. An hour spent with Mr. Bramwell was always, to a hearty aspiring Christian, an hour of great pleasure and decided profit. Mrs. Tatham observes, on this subject, "The more conversant I am with religious men, the more I am dissatisfied; I find few, indeed, that are real helpers of my faith and love. There is a great deficiency in most religious characters, especially as it respects the spirit of prayer; indeed, there are few that maintain their character in the church as my old friend W. B. [William Bramwell.] When I have been in his society, I have been convinced, quickened, and

* "After tea," says one, "at his request, we all prayed until the time of preaching."

strengthened ; but, generally, when I get into other company, if I abide long with them, I suffer loss, grow cold, and sometimes lose sight of the mark, and my relish, in part, for pure spiritual enjoyments.”* Equally emphatic is the remark of the Rev. James Everett, than whom few have better appreciated Mr. Bramwell’s character : “It was impossible to be in his company without profiting. I never left him without a determination to live nearer to God ; and was never with him without being ashamed of my own littleness.”

Then would come the time for public worship ; and, in addition to the pulpit duties of the Sabbath, he was employed almost every night in the week in preaching, or attending some religious meeting. Let us follow him to the chapel—suppose it a Sunday evening.

A large congregation is assembled. A devout and serious spirit appears to pervade the whole, for the man about to address this multitude is one whose presence—whose name even—rarely failed to inspire the most solemn emotions. He is now ascending the stairs of the pulpit. A glance at his countenance is sufficient to rivet the attention. There is a being before you whose whole aspect breathes of heaven more than it does of earth. Your first impression is that *he*, at any rate, is not an ordinary, grovelling denizen of this world ; he seems, rather, to have just descended from the Mount. He has come, indeed on an embassy from the King of kings :—

“There stands the messenger of truth : there stands
The legate of the skies !”

His face is expressive of power, energy, will, dignity,—yet mixed with much sweetness and benevolence. It is large—even massive ; the forehead capacious ; the nose masculine ; the lips firm and compressed ; the eye dark and commanding ; and the long black hair thrown back from his brow (as was the custom then), and falling loosely upon his shoulders, furnishes a kind of picturesque background, which gives considerable effect to his appearance. He is simply clad ; his attire is neat but primitive, and if you could catch a glimpse of his knees, you would perceive, from the threadbare cloth, that his constant employment was prayer.

He commences the service of the evening. His solemn delivery of the hymn ; his voice, deep and full of emotion, aid the impression his appearance excites. At first, however, you hear little more than a low breathing ; for his tones did

* Dr. Beaumont’s Memoirs of Mrs. Tatham, p. 153.

not acquire their natural strength until he had surmounted the perturbation of mind occasioned by his position; this was a feeling which assailed him so frequently, that he seldom went to the pulpit without an inward struggle. To one grasping after souls, as he did, and groaning for their deliverance from the frightful perils by which they were environed—and few, perhaps, had a more vivid perception of those perils—the question whether he should, *this night*, aid in rescuing any from destruction, was fearfully exciting. If his duty were performed imperfectly, might not some sinner then present, to hear a last sermon, remain untouched, and the blood of that poor soul be required at the hands of the preacher? If well, would not the angels in heaven rejoice over the success of this very evening, and some repentant transgressor celebrate the occasion throughout eternity, as the commencement of his spiritual life—the hour of his spiritual nativity? There, too, the preacher stood with a commission from the Almighty; he was to speak in the name of his master, and to say what that master himself would have said, had he been palpably present. If he executed his task faithfully, what service so great—if faithlessly, what sin so grievous? It was a work, indeed, he said, “which made him tremble in the presence of God” to the end of his life.

As the hymn proceeds, however, you may distinguish the preacher’s voice; for his early love of psalmody has not been weakened by the lapse of years; the little chorister of Cop Chapel is before you, but how changed, not only in person but in spirit! Now he can sing with the soul, and if the theme and melody are alike congenial, no heart beats, no tongue moves, more fervently than his. If the hymn should happen to be that favorite one—

“Oh, wond’rous power of faithful prayer!
 What tongue can tell the Almighty grace?
 God’s hands or bound or open are,
 As Moses or Elijah prays,” &c.

it is delivered with such marked emphasis, and sung with such obvious fervour, that no one can doubt the genuine emotion which it produces in the preacher’s feelings. This finished, he engages in the exercise in which his most extraordinary qualifications were developed. You cannot listen long without discovering that this is a ‘Wrestling Jacob,’—a man mighty in prayer. He pleads like one who is familiar with the throne of grace—like one who knows that he has ready audience in the courts of heaven, and who believes that earnest, energetic treaty will infallibly prevail. The responses

of the congregation wax louder and heartier as he proceeds ; their interest in the holy struggle increases, until the chapel echoes with the sounds of supplication, and each sentence which falls from the preacher's lips is crowned by a reverential burst from almost every pew. Perhaps, at length, heaven is opened, and the influence of the Holy One descends upon the assembled multitude.* If so, it is a happy augury ; there may be many sinners converted—many disciples edified to-night ! If not, that influence is but delayed—not wholly denied.

After the intermediate duties of the pulpit are performed, the preacher delivers his text, and begins his discourse. Here, too, at first, his feelings may be somewhat embarrassed, although not visibly so to the audience ; his mind is yet tremulous with the thought of his heavy responsibilities. Such, perhaps, would be his agitation at times, that his 'sermon would be taken from him, so that, without the immediate help of God, he could not preach at all.' But after a few sentences have been pronounced, the inward pressure vanishes, and "that Eternal Spirit," (to quote the magnificent prose of Milton,) "who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of his servant." Thus kindled, he plunges into his subject.

It is difficult to hearken long to that earnest exciting voice, without feeling some perturbation of mind, pleasing or painful. You can scarcely gaze upon his solemn, but animated countenance and glowing eye, without experiencing a kind of fascination. It is evident that he has some grand object before him, in which his whole soul is engaged. This man, you say, is in earnest. Whether his views and purposes may be right or wrong, he, at any rate, is no hypocrite—no heartless retailer of the sublimest truths in the universe. He is a sincere believer—a genuine worker. He preaches, in fact (to use an expression of King James's), as if death were at his elbow. He is not the one to discuss the momentous topics of which the pulpit should be the vehicle, in a languid sleepy manner, or to talk of life and its perils, eternity and its mysteries, as if they were the hackneyed themes for a mere scholastic exercise. His energy is truly overwhelming. Given

* There have been times when the results of the first prayer were such as to render a sermon superfluous, and almost inappropriate. "At Eyam, Derbyshire, in the morning, the power of God came upon the people under the first prayer, so that Mr. Bramwell did not attempt to preach. Several were in deep distress ; prayer was continued until all in the place seemed to feel it. How many were set at liberty, I cannot tell. The Lord wrought wonders."—Sigston's *Life of Mr. Bramwell*, p. 373.

those two grand qualifications—sincerity of motive, and earnestness of feeling—it is scarcely possible that a preacher can be weak or unimpressive. There is a nameless power and momentum attached to such virtues. They possess the merit of setting other minds in motion, and impelling them onward by a subtle but irresistible influence. The hearer is borne away almost unconsciously, and soon finds himself sweeping rapidly along, whithersoever the speaker chooses to conduct him.

In this case the minister has not proceeded far, before you, also, discover that he is endowed with another attribute of unspeakable importance:—he goes, as Carlyle would say, “to the heart of the matter at once.” What was the aim of a public ministry? To win souls. How was the soul to be reached? Through the conscience. And with what language? The simplest and most pointed. Out of the many purposes, which in practice are found to actuate ministers, he had selected the only true one: of methods, the primary one; and of speech, the severest of all.

He must have souls: for this was the grand business of his calling; their salvation was the ‘glory of the ministry.’ He strove to secure one under every sermon;—if possible, two, three, or more. You observe with what intense feeling he pursues this object. How vividly he paints the terrible position of sinners! He pictures them as brands devoted to the burning. The fire was already kindled to consume them; the flames were already dilating to envelope them. A little while, and rescue would be impossible! Yet there they stood—ignorant of their danger, and heedless of death! Should he not rush forward to pluck those brands from the burning? The ‘roaring lion’ is roaming in search of prey:—he has marked an unwary sinner for destruction, and with stealthy steps is approaching; every moment the distance is diminishing; at length he pauses, and collects his strength for the fatal bound—and yet the perilled wretch knows not that the destroyer is upon him! Shall not the preacher lift up his voice to scare the monster—to arouse the victim? And yonder, too, is another unhappy mortal, hurrying on with rapid strides, his eyes shut, and a dreadful abyss yawning before him! A few more steps, and he will be lost for ever! Can the preacher see this, and not raise a warning shout, or stretch forth a friendly hand to arrest him? No—he cannot! He will try, at all hazards, to snatch those brands from the burning—to startle the devourer from his intended prey—to stop the madman before he reaches the margin of the abyss! If he fails,

he has, nevertheless, done what he could; but if he succeeds, ah, then there will be gladness in heaven, triumph on earth, and bitter disappointment in hell!

In the first instance, the ordinary appeals would be essayed. But, perhaps, these were ineffective. The hearts of the wicked had been hardened; messenger after messenger had visited them in vain; sermon after sermon had been preached, without symptoms of amendment; the Holy Spirit had stood and striven with them through many long years of sin—and yet they were unsaved, nay, still unsoftened! Was this to continue? If gentle means had failed, ought not sterner to be adopted? The soul, therefore, must be reached through its fears, if not through its affections. For this purpose, the preacher invokes the thunders of the law. Peal after peal bursts over the heads of the obdurate sinners. He seizes its bolts, and hurls them with a sinewy arm. He empties his quiver, and the keenly-pointed shafts fly hither and thither—wounding deeply wherever they strike. He describes the ‘terrors of the Lord’* in language the most startling, and in colours the most vivid. Here his imagination displays itself in all its sombre grandeur. Pictures, which the skill of a Fuseli or a Martin would have best realized, are drawn before the mind’s eye of his fascinated audience. They are told of the dangers by which the transgressor is surrounded—of the bitterness and degradation of a life of profligacy—the abandonment of the impenitent soul by the out-wearied Spirit—the malignant triumph of the Evil One—the unavailing agony and despair of the death bed—the terrible resuscitation of conscience, when remorse should be too late—the hurried introduction of the disembodied soul into the world of shadows—its summons to the bar of an angry Deity—the horrors of judgment—the sentence of irrevocable banishment—the shriek of hopeless misery—the beginning of ages of torture—the opening of hell—the writhings of the worm which dieth not, and the scorplings of the fire which cannot be quenched! These, or such of

* In a letter to a friend, describing his passage through the furnace of affliction, he says, “I never had so clear a view of the torments of the damned. It was shown me most clearly that the terrors of the Lord are not attended to in our preaching, as much as is necessary; and, depend upon it, this is one cause of our leanness. The world must be made sick; men must feel their want of Christ.” But it must not be supposed that Mr. Bramwell was enamoured of this stormy kind of preaching. He would much rather have comforted than condemned. Hence, says he, in another letter, “I think you should fully try every place in your circuit in the consolatory way.—Preach till Conference in an encouraging manner. Sometimes we must beat; but this is a rare case. Dwell much on the love of Jesus, &c.” It was clear, however, that a purely consolatory regimen would be as inapplicable to an impenitent sinner, as judicial comfortings to an impenitent highwayman. The preacher whose object is chiefly to awaken,—not to keep awake merely; to startle sinners—not soothe believers, must occasionally adopt a stronger mode of address, than may be palatable to those who love a quiet and accommodating ministry.

them as may be thought requisite for the purpose, pass in frightful panorama before the excited congregation. The preacher seems, like Dante, to be struggling through an *Inferno*. It was "sometimes thought that the fire of his genius never blazed so bright as when he was addressing the sinner. He had a natural talent for poetry, and I have heard him speak, extempore, most striking paragraphs in a sort of blank verse, for twenty or thirty lines together, when he seemed to plunge the sinner into the midst of tormenting flames. I once heard him preaching from these words of the Apostle, 'To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' At that time he so displayed 'the terrors of the Lord,' as to make our flesh cringe at his rehearsal; and we were ready to exclaim, 'Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?'"* The judgment day and its awful adjuncts was a theme of appalling interest in the hands of such a preacher. An individual who heard him discourse on this topic, in Lambeth Chapel, describes the effect as overpowering. When he spoke of the great conflagration, the climax, in an oratorical view, was one of startling grandeur, enhanced as it was by the solemn, impressive delivery of the minister. "You have, perhaps, seen," he said, "a *house* on fire, and observed the peril and commotion which ensue; you may have even seen a *street* on fire—nay, possibly, you may have seen a *town* itself on fire, and witnessed all the horrors of such a calamity. But what is a house on fire—what is a street on fire—what is a town itself on fire, compared with a *world* in a blaze? What are these to a spectacle in which you will behold a God in grandeur, and a world in flames?"

But whatever may be the method he adopts in addressing the sinner, he has but one object, and that is to reach his soul. Does it all produce the desired effect? *Is* the sinner aroused—alarmed? Look around, and you see faces full of interest, some of terror, others of tearful remorse. Listen, and you may catch the groan of a stricken culprit—the anguished ex-

* Funeral Sermon on Mr. Bramwell, by Mr. William Dawson.

clamation, "What shall I do to be saved?"—the hurried cry of some poor reprobate suddenly overpowered*—or it may be the confused clamour of numbers of wounded and agitated hearers.

The speaker pauses for a moment; the eye softens, the tone changes, and, with a tremulous voice, he now proceeds to unfold the promises and consolations of the Gospel! He passes from Sinai to Calvary—from Ebal to Gerizim. Like a parent mildly endeavouring to lure back his errant children, he invites sinners to the cross. In accents of genuine pathos, he entreats the wanderers to return to their homes. In the name of the Spirit and the bride, he says—come! Would they but look to that cross, and look *now*, salvation would assuredly be theirs! Without a moment's delay, he urges them to seek and secure this priceless jewel. Indeed, this doctrine of an 'immediate salvation' was his greatest doctrine. He preached in the present tense. It might have been the motto of every sermon; 'to-day—to-night—this very hour—may be the day, the night, the hour of redemption!' The magical word 'NOW,' was ever on his lips or in his thoughts. His face was resolutely set against the dangerous and dilatory policy of a Felix; the present season, however inconvenient, was *the* season always enforced. The prominence which he gave to this doctrine, and his unwearied efforts to bring the unconverted to an immediate decision, contributed in no small degree to his wonderful successes. Here he struck at the tempting fallacy of procrastination, by which millions have been ruined. When this was once demolished, need it be said that many a sinner, terrified by the threats of the law, allured by the promises of the Gospel, and assured of an immediate salvation, yielded to his persuasive entreaties, and then and there exchanged the slavery of Satan for the service of Jehovah?

Perhaps he next addresses himself to believers. The lambs of the flock are objects of peculiar solicitude. For them he has words of comfort and encouragement. The preacher who was lately launching forth the terrible denunciations which alone could move the impenitent sinner, melts into the tenderest strains when he turns and speaks to the feeble followers of Christ. The son of thunder has become a son of

* "An old woman, above seventy years of age, was struck in a moment. She fell to the ground, making a frightful noise, and continued in an agony for above an hour." Miss Rhodes' Journal, (Sigston's Memoir, 372).—"Many cried, yea, groaned aloud for mercy," (Ibid. 370).—"Whilst he was speaking, the power of God came down, and there was a general cry for mercy." (Ibid. 373.)

consolation. He is now as "soft as twilight, and as tender as the mother singing her infant to sleep."*

To the maturer disciples he preaches perseverance and constant progress. In reference to them, his favorite doctrines were 'entire sanctification;' and, in a certain sense, 'Christian perfection.' But perhaps amongst the professors of religion, there is a false one: there may be hypocrites in the church? Then, the indignation natural to a mind marked by its singleness and sincerity, would burst forth with appalling vehemence. Hypocrisy—insincerity—falsehood; call it what you will, *that* is the vice of vices! Crime is not merely bad deeds; it is rather bad intentions. But for a man to practise what is evil, and at the same time to know so clearly that it is evil, as to perceive the necessity of assuming the appearance of goodness—this is wickedness, the most deceitful, and therefore the most abominable! Vice becomes more vicious when it puts on the mask of religion. Satan is still more satanic when habited as an angel of light. The moral instinct of the preacher takes fire at the sin which is most universally despised and detested—the sin which excites the abhorrence of the bad as well as the good. With an indignant hand he strips the dissembler of his disguise. One vestment after another is torn away from the guilty heart, until you see it disclosed in all its corruption and deformity. It was against such that his fiercest denunciations were levelled.

During this discourse, the countenances of the hearers, if watched, would have exhibited almost every variety of human expression. You might have observed one emotion coursing another over the same face, and read off the whole gamut of feeling from a physiognomical inspection of the audience. There might have been seen curiosity, wonder, alarm, remorse, despair, hope, triumph, and other forms of human sensibility. There were few wandering eyes, and few wandering thoughts during such a service. The preacher riveted the attention of all. He possessed a marvellous power over his hearers, and touched their passions at pleasure. In the language of Gray, he held the golden keys—

"This to unlock the gates of Joy,
Of Horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

Indeed, if he had fancied there were any symptoms of weariness or inattention, he would probably have paused, or suddenly concluded his discourse. He could scarcely permit

* Memoir of Mr. William Dawson.

children to utter a sound.* He exercised a gentle species of despotism over his congregation, yet with due allowance for human infirmity. Coughing was peculiarly annoying, but to meet the necessity of the case, he has been frequently known to state that he could make pauses every now and then, in order that those who were troubled with colds might avail themselves of the opportunity. But it was a very rare thing for him to preach without producing audible effects of another description—the mournful cries of penitents, or the rapturous exclamations of believers! Sometimes, perhaps, the groans of a sinner writhing in the pangs of remorse—‘of some strong swimmer in his agony’—would surmount all other sounds, and compel the preacher to finish his sermon prematurely. At others, an electrical influence appears to have swept through the whole assembly: ‘people burst into tears on every side.’ A congregation of two thousand persons has been so much affected, that it was impossible to restrain its feelings. Even mature professors succumbed to the mysterious power which developed itself on such occasions, and were ‘so seized, as to tremble from head to foot, and with difficulty hold their peace.’ The impression made upon some minds was most intense. It seemed to one as if the heavenly host were there, and every soul filled with God. To another, the glory of God appeared to manifest itself, and pervade the whole chapel. To many, a little Pentecost was rehearsed. And when, either during the sermon, or under the prayers which ensued, the power of the Holy One fastened upon the sinner, and ground the heart of stone to dust within its grasp—when his tumultuous cries compelled the preacher to pause, with what earnestness would the latter intercede for the poor penitent! But when there arose an ecstatic shout, which announced that a spirit-child was newly born—that a lost prodigal had just returned to his father’s arms—that Satan had sustained another defeat, and the cross gained another victory—the happy minister was filled with gratitude, “his countenance shone with a heavenly radiance, and his eyes sparkled like flames of fire!”

On some occasions, the enthusiasm excited was so great

* This was once productive of a rather amusing incident. During the progress of a sermon, he was frequently interrupted by the cries of an infant, which was placed in a conspicuous part of the chapel. He requested the female, under whose care it was, to remove the juvenile disturber of the peace. For some reason or other, she took no notice of this intimation, until at length the child became so noisy, that the preacher found he was losing the attention of his audience. He therefore repeated his request in a manner so pointed, that the good woman was compelled to comply. Her temper, however, gave way under the emergency. Snatching up the child, she threw an angry glance at the minister, and exclaimed in sharp, hurried accents, “Jesus Christ said, ‘suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.’” With this rebuke, she hastened from the chapel.

that "the meeting has been concluded again and again; but the people *would not go home.*" On another, an individual states that many persons were so much affected, "that, at the conclusion of the service, they could not come down the gallery stairs without assistance."

To a mere bystander, these and similar scenes, of no infrequent occurrence under the ministrations of one whose power over the human heart was so singular, would doubtless present an appearance which could only be explained on the easy and ancient hypothesis of 'fanatical excitement.' There might be much that was really objectionable in these disorderly seasons of refreshing. The taste of the present day is by no means favorable to enthusiasm. It may, however, be well worthy of consideration, whether the average temperature which marks our devotions, is a proper adjustment between the extremes of scorching heat and polar frigidity. It will be remembered that in religious matters, there is *another* state, which is denounced in Holy Writ with no little indignation—a state in which the subjects are *neither* hot nor cold. The spiritual thermometer of a church or a chapel may not rise to the fever point, nor yet fall to the freezing point; but it may denote the equally dangerous condition of *lukewarmness*. There is, perhaps, no valid reason why men should not hit the correct medium, but if it were necessary to make a choice between the upper and lower portions of the scale, there can be little doubt which ought to be preferred. Where the soul and its interests are concerned, it will always be safer to do too much than too little. A superfluity of ardour in such matters, if accompanied by an honest intention, is perhaps one of the most pardonable offences that can be committed. But whatever standard of propriety is adopted, it is clear that there may be *extraordinary* times and seasons. No one who believes that the Spirit of God is present wherever true believers are assembled, and that the developement of its influences is in some measure proportioned to the earnestness with which those influences are invoked, can resist such an inference. In like manner it is obvious, that there may be individuals whose uncommon faith or fervour may render them superior instruments in the production of extraordinary manifestations. When an evangel is fresh and unsophisticated, and the evangelist earnest and devoted, then, if ever, we may expect signs and wonders. Every return to the apostolic spirit is in some degree a return to apostolic power; every restoration of the apostolic days doubtless involves some repetition of apostolic scenes. The period of which we speak, belonged to the earlier history of

Methodism, which, as its founder always asserted, was an “extraordinary work,” and of the many pious men who adorned its ministry, perhaps none was more remarkable for energy and success in dealing with heaven than Mr. Bramwell.

Many, of course, who admit the principle abstractly, will assert that these religious commotions are not connected with Divine influences; they are produced by human ‘fanaticism,’—possibly by ‘diabolical agency!’ The sudden conversions of earlier Wesleyanism, accompanied, as they frequently were, by great mental agitation, and sometimes by physical convulsions, have been severely criticised, and as severely condemned. Mr. Wesley wisely intrenched himself in a position which was altogether impregnable. Called upon to explain these phenomena, he carried the question from the cloudy tribunal of theory to the material one of fact:—“look at the *result!*” If a veteran sinner renounces his evil practices—if the drunkard becomes temperate—the profligate chaste—the reprobate holy—we may call the cause what we will, or say of the transaction what we like, the *consequences* crush all objection. It is scarcely likely that pure fanaticism will induce a transgressor to keep the ten commandments, or that Satan will instigate him to perform the whole duty of man. The Enemy has been known to sow tares amongst the wheat, but never, we believe, to produce an unadulterated crop of genuine grain!

Mr. Bramwell was by no means disposed to foster or sanction anything like unnecessary noise or turbulence in these proceedings. He knew, however, that some allowance might safely be made for a little excess of excitement. It is obvious, that the rapid metamorphosis of souls cannot always be effected with due regard to the nervous system. Our views of decorum may possibly be outraged by the ardour of preachers or the agony of penitents. When human spirits are writhing in the mysterious processes of the new birth, they will not comport themselves with the same imperturbable gravity with which they would listen to a formal prayer or a chilling homily. When sinners are plucked from the fingers of Satan, and placed at the feet of the Saviour, it is not improbable that there may be a tremendous shout of vexation from the tormentors below, and an exulting response from the angels above:—may not a little exuberance be pardoned between? If, on such occasions, a single conversion be effected, however much we may regret the uproar, it is but an *accident* of the noblest of *realities*. The noise is over with the hour—the event is for eternity.

At the same time it should be observed, that few men were better judges of genuine or spurious excitement than Mr. Bramwell. In this respect, his singular penetration of character enabled him to detect more than one attempt at deception, where others did not even suspect it. At one revival meeting which he conducted, a female, who was stationed in the front of the gallery, broke out into loud cries, as if from a sudden access of conviction. Mr. Bramwell paused, eyed her sternly, and exclaimed before the congregation, "This is not of God: take the woman away." He was correct. As the reverse of this incident, it may be related, that when he was preaching on another occasion before an auditory, which at that time was perhaps little versed in the more striking exhibitions of spiritual agony, a woman was suddenly overpowered. "Air, air,—she wants air," whispered some who were near her. The preacher paused, looked significantly at them, but said nothing. He knew that she, poor creature, cared nothing for air: she wanted rather to escape fire!—Still more, Mr. Bramwell was not only wishful to exclude fictitious or extravagant excitement, but also to regulate the legitimate emotion of these seasons as much as practicable. There must be no interference with the proceedings—no double prayers in the liveliest meetings—and if there was any grouping round a poor penitent, it was so arranged that it should not interrupt the general business of the hour.

The service over, you leave the chapel with the sounds of the preacher's voice still ringing in your ears, and its utterances yet agitating your heart. How is it, you ask, that he had acquired such a mastery over human souls, and enjoys such support from heaven? Because, in the significant language of Scripture, he had been baptised with fire! With fire—the richest of ministerial endowments! His lips had been touched with a live coal from the altar. The cloven tongue sat upon him. His soul was like the bush on Horeb—enveloped in flames, yet unconsumed. Its issues were the "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." They were "warm from the heart, and faithful to its fires." They fell upon the conscience of the sinner, like drops of molten metal, and *burnt* themselves into it. To use his own words, the minister that would do good must be 'like fire amongst dry stubble.' To use the words of a hearer, he was "like a flame of fire." It was this subtle element—this invisible glow—which spread from heart to heart, and ran the round of the congregation, until all were more or less flushed with its hallowed influence. Here it was plain, the preacher depended

upon no mere water baptism; his soul had been steeped in fire, and after *that* sacrament, a man preaches well!*

Then, to revert to another cause of his success, you observe the skill with which he has assailed the conscience. To speak in homely terms, his policy was to make a dash at this object, and overwhelm it by a bold and impetuous attack. In spiritual strategy, as well as in military, this movement is often the most successful. There are preachers, as there are generals, who pursue a more formal and circuitous process: the soul must be regularly invested—its bulwarks of error undermined—its walls battered from a distance—breaches duly effected by means of heavy logic—one outwork captured after another—and the garrison finally forced into a capitulation out of sheer exhaustion. This method may have its advantages, but it is also exposed to a serious inconvenience—it may never come to a conclusion!† There is perhaps time

* The following dream, in which Mr. Bramwell was mentioned in high terms, by no less distinguished a shade than Mr. Wesley's, was related to Mr. Sigston by a minister. The latter one night imagined that he saw the founder of Methodism enter the house where he was. "I told him (Mr. W.) of the desire which I felt to devote myself to the service of the Lord, as an itinerant in his connexion. He rubbed his hands, and, with great affability, expressed his approbation. As I had already hurt my health by loud and violent speaking, and had received from different persons very opposite directions relative to my mode of delivery in the pulpit, it occurred to me to ask the opinion of Mr. Wesley, 'whether or not I should endeavour to continue that earnestness of manner in preaching with which I had commenced?'—He said, 'You know the clergy in general adopt a cool and deliberate method of speaking, and do but little good. We must look upon ourselves as ministers called of God, out of the ordinary way, to awaken a sleepy world to a sense of sin and danger, and earnestly to direct all men to Christ: therefore, labour hard in the pulpit.' I replied, 'But inasmuch as conversion can be effected only by the operation of the Spirit of God on the hearts of the people, may we not expect that operation as much when speaking in a cool and deliberate manner, as when we use the utmost warmth and energy of expression?' He said 'No: The Holy Spirit co-operates with the word, when it is delivered in a warm and earnest manner, and makes it effectual to conversion: as witness William Bramwell, although many take him for an enthusiast.' He then bade me farewell."

† Is not this true, to a melancholy extent, in all our religious communities? Many men go to church or chapel with exemplary regularity, and yet evince their want of religious principle by the most undeniable tokens. They listen very devoutly to their pastor's discourses, and may really feel greatly edified by his exhortations. The impression, however, is but transitory. If it only survives till the middle of the week, it will probably lead to nothing. Suppose it renewed the following Sunday; suppose distinct impressions to be made every successive Sunday—if these were all combined, they might produce some result. *But each vanishes before the other arrives.* The ultimate result is, of course,—nothing. A general night as well expect to storm a town, by despatching his soldiers singly and successively into the breach, instead of launching them in masses against the foe. One powerful and impassioned appeal, forcibly impinging upon the heart—one earnest and vigorous attempt upon the conscience, may do more in a single hour, than the dropping unconnected efforts of half a century. Religious impressions are not to be permanently induced by paltry impulses, made at distant intervals. The minister who expects it, dooms himself to the task of Sisyphus. He may urge his hearer a slight way up the hill of piety one Sunday; but the next, he will find him lying contentedly at the foot, and as passive as ever. Yet the mischief is immeasurably enhanced, when the means employed to promote spiritual reformation are cold, stately, literary discourses. "To speak coldly and slightly of Heavenly things," says Richard Baxter, "is much the same as to say nothing of them." However correct in language, or unexceptionable in theology they may be, they can accomplish little if they do not penetrate to the heart. How can they, indeed, be expected to set the soul on fire. How many of them would be required for the purpose? Just as many—to quote a saying of Cardinal Richelieu's, when asked what number of prayers would be necessary to release a sufferer from purgatory—as it would "take snow-balls to heat an oven!"

to repair every breach between every blow : the impression of one day is effaced before the impression of another is made. And even if the outworks should be stormed, and the town taken,—if prejudices, and doubts, and fallacies, should be vanquished—still the citadel, the HEART, may remain untouched and unconquered. William Bramwell was a tactician of another description. He turned his artillery upon the most vulnerable point—the conscience. If that were carried, all was won : the intellect and the heart might then be easily subdued. Hence, therefore, he concentrated his forces, and poured his shot, upon this prominent object. There was no time for repairs ; one blow followed another with singular rapidity : he flung away none of his fire—all told. A chasm soon yawned in the stoutest ramparts beneath this incessant hail, and through that chasm the ‘clean and holy spirits’ which had long been waiting for admission, rushed triumphantly into the little “town of Mansoul,” whilst the evil ones fled discomfited from the fortress where they had long reigned and revelled !

There might be something rough and boisterous in all this ; and there are many, perhaps, who would disapprove of such a system of ministration. Energetic preaching is not always liked. It is apt to disturb a sinner’s equanimity, or to distract the criticism of a literary believer. It does not suit nervous hearers, or placid professors. It is particularly obnoxious to that large class of titular Christians, whose piety is too formal to admit of stirring, searching investigation. It pierces too readily—penetrates too deeply. Such will murmur. Murmur ! They might as well complain of a surgeon hurting them whilst probing a wound, as of a minister painning them whilst probing a corrupted nature ! Vices are not to be uprooted, nor evils corrected, without incurring some little agitation—possibly some serious inconvenience. The medicines which remove the sin-fever may be quite as unpalatable to the patient as those employed to dislodge any other distemper. An operation upon the soul may produce not less torment in the nature of things than one upon the eye. Some persons seem to think that the greatest disorder can be cured with the least pain ; and a diseased heart abstracted in so gentle and gradual a manner, that they shall feel no discomfort under the process ! A sermon which does not excite a single pang in the sinner’s breast, had better not be preached at all to him ; it is only fit for a congregation of finished saints or unfallen spirits.

But in reviewing the ministry of Mr. Bramwell, it should

be remembered that it was in conformity with the genius of his day, of his community, and of the peculiar circumstances in which that community stood, as a great agent in the revival of pure and vital religion. Wesleyanism then possessed a kind of rugged, unpolished energy, consequent upon its youth, its primitive purity, and its comparatively unsystematized condition. The *Ism* was little or nothing to its genuine professors. The living power which it was employed to support, was developed as a primary force—not as a subsidiary virtue. It gushed forth in all its wild and untamed energy from hearts throbbing with that grandest of passions—the love of souls. If it was destitute of the smooth regularity which discipline produces, it was destitute of the feebleness which the ecclesiastical spirit, when strongly expressed, too certainly engenders. The Wesleys, Walshes, and Nelsons were the bold Apostles destined to infuse some fresh vigour, and religious blood into the community at large. As dissenters, they would otherwise have been useless. Of tame, placid, mild-spoken ministers—men who would not, for the world, have ruffled the tranquillity of the hearer, or been troublesome to his conscience, or put him to any annoyance in serving God—there were enough, and to spare, when the Wesleyan itinerants took the field. These humble, hardy soldiers were required; but it was to do that work which, at the time, few cared to attempt, and which, but for them, must long have remained unaccomplished. Their business was to glean the fields after their more dignified brethren of the establishment—to sweep the highways—and traverse the moors and fens, in order to carry their Maker's invitation to the poor, and compel them to come in to the 'Gospel feast.' And truly, it was astonishing to observe what gems and brilliants were discovered in such extra-parochial localities, and accepted by the Redeemer as the sparkling ornaments of His crown! These adventurous disciples of Christ, somehow or other, picked up many a precious piece of jewellery, which would otherwise, to all human appearance, have been totally overlooked. Considering the peculiar province they occupied, their labours effected what more decorous ministrations would probably have failed to do. They did not always please the taste—but they generally touched the heart. Grammar—logic—ceremony—elegance—and the other excellent proprieties, might be frequently infringed; but then souls were also frequently won in spite of the infraction. The virtue of the Apostles had not, perhaps, been formally imparted; but the inspiration of the Holy Ghost had been undeniably com-

municated. Indeed, it is worthy of observation, that the mysterious influence, which alone gives value and efficiency to a man's ministrations, has been sometimes poured out upon despised conventiclers and humble wayside preachers, in a most unaccountable manner. Down from the fishermen and tent-makers of Palestine to the lay coadjutors of Wesley, God has chosen his ambassadors from the meanest ranks of life, whenever it seemed good to Him, and sealed their ministerial credentials with living seals. Nor is it at all unlikely that Satan has stood in as great fear of the undisciplined volunteers, who have flocked to the homely standards, unfurled by such genuine crusaders, as of the trim and showy warriors who gather around the silken banners of old established institutes. Do we ask for the greatest spiritual battle-fields of the world;—the places where the brave soldiery of Christ have most intrepidly crossed swords with the armies of the aliens—where the Prince of Darkness has been most fiercely assailed, and most signally beaten—where the doughtiest deeds have been done, and the most brilliant successes achieved? The history of that strange eventful war, between the good and evil principles—between the wise Oromasdes and the wicked Ahriman—which is raging all around us, and too often within us, will doubtless exhibit a very different tale to the one chronicled by our church annalists below! Those who may be happy enough to study that many-volumed history, amongst the other archives of heaven, will probably find that the stateliest tabernacles or the most majestic cathedrals, have not always been the chosen theatres for the display of Almighty power. For some of the most hallowed scenes of spiritual triumph, they must turn from Herod's temple, Saint Peter's Church, and Westminster Abbey, to obscure upper rooms, humble conventicles, or even to sanctuaries un-walled, unroofed, and undefined, save by the cloud of the Divine glory! The Shekinah has not always hovered between the cherubim, veiled in purple and scarlet, and lodged in a house of cedar and gold. It has shone forth in many an unconsecrated spot with dazzling brilliancy, when magnificent fanes have been left dark and deserted. It was in an upper room of a nameless dwelling that the Spirit of Fire made its pentecostal descent, and that three thousand souls were torn from the hands of Satan, and added to the church: at a short distance from the same building stood the proud temple of Jerusalem, and probably within its cold precincts, were to be found only self-righteous Pharisees and sordid money changers! One Whitsun holiday, George Whitefield flung

himself amongst the rabble of Moorfields, collected a crowd around him, and, in spite of the uproar and annoyance of the 'craftsmen,' preached with such extraordinary effect, that notes of distress were brought him from upwards of a thousand individuals:—not far distant, the gilded cross of St. Paul's was glittering aloft in the sunbeams, but beneath that majestic dome, which looks as if it had been heaved upwards by prayer, or were a petrified cloud of praise, perhaps not a single cry from a broken heart had been extorted—there had been no fluttering of heavenly wings—not a solitary angel's footstep heard! It is not by might or by power that the triumphs of religion are achieved, "but by my spirit saith the Lord," and strangely enough (to us) has that spirit chosen its times, and places, and instruments! God's tabernacles on earth are sometimes hovels; his nobles, paupers; his favorite priests, unconsecrated laymen; and his warmest disciples, the despised and rejected of men!

No wonder, then, that a man so well adapted to the period in which he lived, and to the position in which he was placed, as Mr. Bramwell, met with such success in his ministry. However much some of his brethren might misapprehend him, the people required pastors of this stamp, and profited by them. They did not want what he himself called 'the ghost of a preacher, who, being dead, yet speaketh.' To guard them as far as he could from a result so deplorable, he addressed a formal circular to the superintendents throughout the Wesleyan connexion. He was apprehensive (as previously stated) that its ministry might become more secular, more listless, and more lukewarm than was compatible with the good of the body and the prosperity of religion. In truth, his notions of preaching, and of the qualifications essential for the sacred office, were so lofty, that he almost regretted the want of a 'law in Methodism to silence a preacher who had lost the power.' Against the tribe of 'men-pleasers' especially, he entertained no little hostility; for if God's accredited ambassadors betrayed their trust, and sacrificed his interests to humour frail mortals, what havoc must be made in the church—what corruption introduced into the ministry! The trust committed to pastors startled him—stunned him rather, we ought to say. He was in terror lest these solemn functions should be made 'a worldly business'—so formal as to create in the minister no more concern than the transaction of any common business of life. He was persuaded that nothing but Almighty power could furnish an adequate protection against such a danger. It was this sentiment, doubt-

less, which gave a peculiar gravity and impressiveness to his preaching. There was nothing coarse or frivolous ever fell from him in the pulpit. His soul was too intensely strung to admit of the least departure from the seriousness with which the awful duties of a Christian minister ought to be performed. He spoke more like a spirit that had risen from the dead to unfold the realities of the future, than like a native of earth, who was but following a profession which habit sometimes renders as common-place as the pursuits of a tradesman or a merchant. Even his language occasionally mounted to a height of sublimity, which showed how deeply the mind was affected by the solemnities of his subject and position. He would break out into a strain of poetry—a kind of blank verse—little inferior, says one of his hearers, to the compositions of Dr. Young; and so fluently delivered, that you might conclude he was quoting from some poem. His style was always in keeping with his earnest but simple character. It was nervous and concentrated. His language was as vigorous English as you could wish to hear. There was plenty of point in his discourses. He had always a plan, although some might think him deficient in the methodical arrangement of his materials. “Does not Mr. Bramwell often wander from his subject?” said a person one day to a Lutheran minister at Hull, who frequently attended the Methodist chapel, whilst the former was in that circuit. “Yes,” replied the other, “he do most delightfully wander from de subject to de heart.” He could deal with a very difficult text—a text from which, as the Rev. Charles Atmore once said, “none but Mr. Bramwell could have preached;” and yet render it plain and appropriate to every understanding. In such cases, he displayed no little originality; and his mode of interpreting and applying the metaphors of Scripture attracted considerable attention, from its force and ingenuity. Although here, if anywhere, a familiar tone and treatment might have been adopted, he knew how to preserve the dignity of his position, and to check any levity of sentiment which the topic in its mere sensuous garb might tend to inspire. Add to these qualifications that of variety—“he had always something new, and never preached two sermons alike;”—* and if our estimate of his ministerial capacities be confined to the points already indicated, it will excite no surprise that one so endowed, produced such extraordinary effects under the copious inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

* Mr. Clarke, of Nottingham.

The public duties of the day being over, we may follow him for a moment to his own domestic circle. Here we find him a happy husband and a contented father. He rejoiced in the society of a wife whose character and piety won his heartiest respect: her religious zeal harmonized with his own, and her noble qualities, both mental and moral, endeared her to his affections in no ordinary degree. Like himself, she was gifted with a talent for prayer, and in this exercise produced effects almost as striking as those which marked his own intercessions. Here she was truly a 'help-meet;' for it was his frequent practice to call upon her to pray in meetings where female assistance was allowable, and none who listened could question the propriety of the call. His children had been carefully trained. Their religious welfare was of course his primary object: his 'concern for their salvation' was great and absorbing. For this he was ever praying. Few ever looked with more solicitude for indications of piety; few ever beheld those indications with more satisfaction. The advice he gave them was earnest and affectionate, and if there might be something stern and authoritative in his treatment generally, yet none could better exhibit a kind and winning demeanour, when a gentle policy was considered most expedient. On this subject especially, his exhortations were not only tender but even respectful, as his letters fully attest:—'My dear George, I hope you increase in prayer and in praise. Live much—live continually to God. Make all your requests known to him. He cares for you a thousand times more than I can do. You will gain everything by devotion.'—'What do you think, William? Have you conviction on your mind? Have you any serious thought of joining God's people? Will you give your father great joy in your conversion?'—'My dear John, I never had so strong a desire that you may live for eternal glory. I pray for it continually. I am with you, sleeping and waking. Oh, let me be with you for ever!'—To his daughter: 'Your being an eminent Christian lies near my heart. I want you to be in the closest union with your Lord; always to sit at his feet.—Live! oh, live! Be a woman of God. Be a striver: learn that blessed track. Make this your daily work; and work it out with fear and trembling. Dear Ann, do all God's will.' And with what pleasure we can suppose him to have traced this brief, but beautiful family sketch:—'My wife is well and happy. George was awakened more than six months ago, and appears to be truly serious. Ann, living in the love of God, is quite happy, and is now with us. William and John

are both serious, and meet in class. Oh, praise the Lord for evermore!

The cultivation of their minds was also a matter of great concern in his discipline; and even when they left his immediate control, and were approaching maturity, his letters abounded with excellent counsel on this subject. Those addressed to his daughter especially, indicate the minute attention he paid to the improvement of the intellect as well as to the humbler matters of dress, appearance, and general deportment.

And if, as we have said, there was something of austerity in his discipline, it ought to be attributed less to his disposition than to his theory of education. He strove to rear his children hardy and healthful beings. He began to exercise a rigorous control over them at a very early age, and never permitted them to cry in his presence unnecessarily. He wished them to be as plain and unaffected as himself, and therefore sternly pursued the course he thought best adapted for the development of those habits and qualities which others admired in him, and which he knew well how to appreciate wherever he beheld them.

That it might have led, in some instances, to injurious results, may be seen from the following little incident. It was part of his system to prohibit his children from receiving any presents, and the infringement of this rule was considered a very heinous offence. One of them, at the age of about five years, was offered a crown-piece by an affectionate friend. The child stated that he durst not accept it, but the donor, somewhat injudiciously, thrust it into his pocket, with the remark, "there now, you have not accepted it—I have made you take it." Afraid of a discovery every moment, the child durst not keep the coin in his pocket, but sallied out on the first opportunity, and expended it in the purchase of a flaming red pocket-book. With this he returned home, but only to become sensible that his difficulty was increased: the pocket-book, was still more suspicious than the crown-piece. An unprincipled servant perceived his distress, and hastened to improve it to her own advantage. She painted the horrors of the doom which hung over him, in case of detection, with malicious industry, and constrained him at length to return the book to the stationer, with some fictitious explanation. This was done, and the price refunded. She then persuaded him to conceal the money in a corner. It is unnecessary to say, that when the poor deluded child looked for it in the morning, it had vanished. His lips were, of course, sufficiently closed to prevent either an inquiry or a complaint. Slight

as may be the circumstance in itself, it will serve to indicate the far more serious consequences which may so easily result from the imposition of unnecessary and impolitic restraints. Many a parent has *made* a child a villain, and that with quite contrary intentions; in fact, driven him into vice, whilst goading him, as he thought, into the path of virtue. Discipline is imperative; but when it invents temptations, and wantonly covers the road with stumbling-stones and rocks of offence, it will not be surprising if he suffers from frequent falls, and, finally, seeks some of the easier byways, which may ultimately conduct him into a labyrinth of guilt: he cannot be expected to exhibit extraordinary, still less superhuman virtue, at a period of life when he is least competent to appreciate it.

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At length, after a frugal supper and a prayer with his family, Mr. Bramwell sought repose. But still his religious exercises were not over. The many prayers of the day were not enough. Even at midnight, the sleeper would frequently awake, and rise from his bed. Throwing a blanket around him, he fell on his knees, and the solemn stillness of the "witching hour" was broken by the earnest communings of that restless soul with its Maker. When this nocturnal exercise was finished, he gave himself to slumber again. He could not, like the turbulent Saint Dunstan, assert that his soul was as intently occupied with spiritual matters during the season of sleep as at other times; but it may be truly said, that it was the only season in his Christian life which was exempted from religious aspirations, or at least from devotional tendencies.—Thus closed a day spent with less sin, and marked with more sanctity, than most mortals would care to attempt or achieve. Safely he might have murmured Cowley's couplet, as he sank to repose—

"To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them; I have lived TO-DAY."*

His diary has long since been submitted to the inspection of the Judge; and if that piercing eye has detected many blots, where all appeared fair and unsullied to a mere human glance, the volume has not been rejected: its pages of guilt have been cancelled, and whatever of good it contained has been copied into the Great Record of human history, preserved in the archives of Heaven.

* Ille potens sui
Lætusque deget, cui licet in diem
Dixisse, Vixi. HOR.



CHAPTER VI.

Second Appointment to Birstal, 1812—Spiritual Survey—Official Improvements—Affliction—Chelsea Circuit, 1814—Regret at this Appointment, and Self-distrust—The Furnace of Affliction again—No Medicine but Spiritual—Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1815—Initial Successes—Scene at the Orphan House—Pet Society at Carville—Mr. Nelson and Incident—National Calamities—Illness of Mrs. Bramwell, and singular Intimation—Mr. Wawn's Observations—Presentiments of Death—Waiting for a Crown—Last Circuit, Salford, 1817—Proceedings there—Reclaiming an Apostate—Incident—Weights to carry—Impressions—Proceeds to Conference at Leeds—Last Sermon—Death-scene—Paradise—Funeral—Epitaph.

His latest victories still thickest came,
As near the centre motion doth increase.

DRYDEN.

We find him . . . marching out of the field of this world in a victorious manner, with colours flying and drums beating; and thus insulting over death as a conqueror,—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

THOMAS CASE.



R. BRAMWELL had been two years in Sheffield, when two circuits became claimants for his services—Nottingham and Birstal. In both of these he had already laboured, but such was the anxiety to recall a favorite minister that the question of his destination was formally put to the Conference of 1812, which determined in favour of the latter place.

It was not without a feeling of curiosity that he re-entered a circuit where his former ministry had been so successful, and where he had sown, and planted, and watered with so much effect. But here too, as at Sheffield, he must have traversed this familiar domain with an anxious heart. Was the ‘good seed’ he had scattered ripening for the harvest, or producing its fruits twenty- or a hundred-fold? Were the trees of righteousness he had planted, increasing in stature, or flourishing in mature proportions? Was God’s vineyard here as prosperous and productive as it was when he left it seventeen years ago? The results of this inquiry were in some respects pleasing; in others unsatisfactory. He went from place to place, and found here and there some goodly trees

spreading their boughs afar, and extending their roots to the 'rivers of water'—others stunted in their growth, and sickly in their appearance—a few with withered leaves and decaying trunks—and perhaps, one or two dead. Some had been transplanted to the garden of the Lord, and were now blooming with immortal verdure. But generally the circuit was deficient in vitality; the streams which formerly conveyed the water of life into every corner, were now dwindled into sluggish rivulets; the soil was parched and thirsty, and it soon became evident that the first desideratum for Birstal was some improvement in its spiritual irrigation. Indeed, the very Sunday on which he recommenced his labours there, the minister detected what he deemed indubitable signs of a 'low state of grace,' and admonished the society tenderly thereon. To work, of course, he went at once. In addition to his ordinary methods of replenishing the storehouses of grace, and reopening the springs and wells of righteousness, he thought it needful to employ the hoe and pruning-hook to a moderate extent. Weeds must be removed, and irregular vegetation repressed, as far as practicable. The meetings and minor assemblies of the society were subjected to a careful revision. The 'bands' were closed to all but those who were qualified, according to methodistic rule, by the enjoyment of justification. Such as had received this grace, were urged to meet further in private band, as it was called, in order that they might be promoted to the higher grade of 'entire sanctification.' Of course, this strictness would prove unpalatable to many; but practically it was found to answer, even beyond his expectations. The Saturday-night band at Birstal was thereby rendered quite select—select, we mean, in piety, and not in conventional regard: it became better than any he had ever known elsewhere. A meeting of the leaders was held every week, instead of every fortnight, as before; and on these occasions all the preachers, if possible, were present. At every place in this circuit where he preached on the week-days, he endeavoured to meet the members specially; after the service was over, he called for the lists, and those who were not present were made the subjects of tender but searching inquiry. Much gratuitous labour was thus undertaken, which compelled him in a great measure to forego the comforts of a home, and the pleasures of privacy. But the sacrifice was cheerfully made; for this minute and affectionate intercourse with the members of the society produced the happiest effects. 'I stay all night,' he says, 'amongst the friends, and find this is the way to receive and to do good.'

I sacrifice my own bed, home, &c. for the good of souls, and in this I am truly happy.' The better regulation also of the classes, was made an object of particular attention. Each of them was reduced to such a number as the leader could conveniently superintend. Twenty souls, he insisted, were a sufficient charge for any one individual. No person was allowed to remain a pluralist under his administration: the most zealous functionary must confine himself to a single class.*

Meanwhile his public and private intercessions—his sermons in the pulpit, and his struggles in the closet—were producing their wonted effects. Not only was his own life 'continual prayer,' but others were earnestly solicited to aid him in procuring for the circuit a second visitation from the Holy Spirit. The rain soon descended anew: the societies drank in the refreshing streams; and in some parts especially the desert began to blossom again as the rose. On Christmas-day (1812) fifty new converts, or thereabouts, were publicly enrolled in the connexion; and the ceremony was performed in Birstal chapel with great solemnity. At the commencement of the following year (1813), he states that upwards of a hundred had been added during the last quarter; in the summer, the number of new disciples had risen to between 300 and 400, and amongst these were many influential individuals, and, in some cases, nearly whole families.

A year was soon spent in these incessant occupations, and amidst these delightful successes. A second came, and was similarly employed, except that, towards its conclusion, he suffered some check from a rheumatic fever. Unwilling to

* The following instructions were given by him to the leaders, and appended to the Class-papers:—

1. That every leader meet his own class, except in cases of urgent necessity.
2. That he be punctual as to the time of meeting.
3. That he sing not more than two verses at the beginning.
4. That he be brief in prayer, and be particular in confining his petitions to those present.
5. That several persons be asked to pray at the conclusion.
6. That the meeting conclude within an hour.
7. That the absentees be noted down, and visited by the leader in the course of the week. [Number 7 develops the full value of the regulation by which the classes were forbidden in duplicate, and the number in each limited to twenty.]
8. That the leader be zealous in speaking to persons who come under the Word.
9. That every leader labour to enjoy the blessing of entire sanctification, as a good qualification for his office.

These leaders were themselves subjected to a special annual examination, when the following interrogations were put:—

1. Are you in debt?
2. Do you enjoy a clear sense of your acceptance with God?
3. Are you wholly sanctified?
4. Are you punctual to the time of beginning, whether the members are present or not?
5. Do you conclude within an hour?
6. Do you attend to family-prayer morning and evening?

suspend his labours even for a single Sabbath, he rode to a neighbouring village, Cleckheaton, the day after his illness commenced, although obviously unequal to his ordinary duties. After preaching, he found himself unable to return home to Birstal; and was therefore conveyed to the house of Mr. Thomas Pearson, at Gomersal. A painful sickness ensued. He suffered great torture; but he had one consolation—it was better, as he energetically observed, ‘than hell-fire!’ He was compelled to abstain from his public duties—but still he could pray; and whilst confined to bed, his active spirit found constant occupation in this intercourse with his Maker. Once, during the affliction, he fell helplessly on the floor, when there was only a single individual in attendance. The latter was alarmed, and, finding it impossible to raise the sufferer, exclaimed, “Oh, Mr. Bramwell, what shall I do?” —“*Pray!*” was the reply. It was done: another effort was made, and when the patient was raised upon the bed, he murmured, “Continue to pray: we shall never sink whilst engaged in that exercise.”

This was not, however, a sickness unto death. His work was as yet unfinished, though hastening to its completion. He was labouring hard to be ready—‘to be ready to leave the world at any moment.’ He was striving more than ever to ‘receive the whole salvation.’ Earnestly he longed to reach ‘the heavenly country:’ he had frequently delightful ‘views of the world to come.’ All things had become ‘dross, when compared with Christ and the glory of his kingdom.’ ‘God is all,’ he says: ‘I wait his coming. Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!’

He waited, indeed, till his work was done in the Birstal circuit, but his Saviour had not yet come. It was needful therefore to go on until the long-expected summons should arrive. Another circuit was selected for him, and after the Conference of 1814, he left Birstal for Chelsea. His second ministry in the former district had been fertile in conversions, and no fewer than five hundred souls had been admitted to the Wesleyan communion during the period of his stay. Many, if not most of them, were, under Divine favour, the contributions of William Bramwell to the church of Christ. Indeed, wherever he went, the contingents which he furnished to the army of the Cross were noble and memorable.

Chelsea—then forming what was methodistically known as the London West Circuit—was by no means the locality he would have chosen for himself, had he been free to make the selection. Though ‘places were little to him’ now, he had

‘a sore conflict’ respecting *this* appointment. A metropolitan circuit, he supposed, must be very different from those in which he had hitherto wrought; and a large town, so far from presenting any attractions for him, excited feelings of sorrow and distrust. The bustle and gaiety of the capital promised no facilities for the successful prosecution of his ministry—quite the contrary; whilst the inevitable secularity of such an atmosphere would render it altogether unpalatable to one who wished to breathe the very ether of heaven. The humble estimate, too, which he had formed of his own abilities, rendered him doubtful as to his competency to preach before the more cultivated audiences he expected to find in London. Hence his transfer to that place was a trial of no ordinary magnitude. For two or three weeks afterwards, he endured ‘such agony on account of it, as he could not express.’ Yet, he observes, ‘I durst not object, because I thought I should never have been proposed, if the Lord’s hand had not been seen in it.’ And in a short time, he persuaded himself that he had been directed thither by Providence. His zeal soon overcame his diffidence, when he glanced round upon the multitudes of that mighty metropolis, and reflected, that, of these, numbers were toiling onward to destruction, and but few comparatively were pursuing the path of salvation. This thought was agony: it was almost ‘more than he could bear.’ ‘Oh, what I feel,’ says he, ‘when I consider the state of London! Ten hundred thousand people! Thirty thousand prostitutes! But so few of God-fearing persons!’

Amongst these masses, however, he was delighted to find several of his own spiritual children, now resident in London. Some were not known to him familiarly, but hastened to claim a relationship, which ought to be the noblest one mortal can assert, or another acknowledge. Such meetings gave him exquisite pleasure; they reminded him of the far more entrancing unions which would some day take place in the hallowed bowers of Paradise. He met also with one man, who stood connected with him in very different relationship. This was an individual who had proved a bitter enemy to him during his stay in Leeds, and had contributed in no slight degree to the suffering he endured at that place. He had acted as principal, or agent, in a species of persecution to which Mr. Bramwell had been subjected; and now, being reduced in circumstances and depressed in mind, he requested the minister to visit him. It is unnecessary to say that the latter did so, and not only forgave the wrong, but treated his injurer—more a subject for pity than resentment—with pecu-

liar kindness, and administered to him both spiritual and temporal assistance.

All his fears as to the correctness of his London appointment were speedily dissipated. Several 'extraordinary seasons' occurred, and these sufficiently attested the presence and power of God. He was satisfied wherever he discovered traces of the Almighty's especial influence. If he could but witness the descent of the Spirit upon a single soul, he felt at home, for God was with him. Effects were soon 'produced in every place:' in some meetings there were positive 'showers;' many were set free from the yoke of sin, and many more awoke to the conviction that they were in a state of bondage and spiritual disease. The preacher had 'power with God, and found universal reception amongst the people;' he enjoyed 'great liberty' in his work, and under almost every sermon beheld the signs and results of Divine assistance. Need it be said that he became extremely popular, and that the prejudice which many entertained against an acknowledged 'revivalist' was soon vanquished, when his sermons were heard, and his character properly understood?

During the winter, however, of this year (1814-5), his labours were seriously interrupted by bodily illness. The complaint was a rheumatic fever, and for nearly three months he was subjected to excruciating pains, often of such intensity, that sleep was rendered almost impracticable. But he went through the furnace fearlessly. Amidst the tortures of the body, the mind was constantly employed in communion with its Maker. As he suffered in the flames another stood by him, whose form was like "the form of the son of God." He knew who it was—that it was, in truth, the son of God himself—and therefore not only endured the fire with dauntless resolution, but passed through it exultingly. The 'glory he experienced' exceeded his powers of utterance: 'he could have shouted mercy continually'—his agony was heaven! There too—in this 'burning fiery furnace,'—he had such 'views of the glory of heaven and the torments of the damned,' that he resolved, if restored to health, to preach, and pray, and struggle as he had never done before. He came forth at last, stimulated and improved by this episode of pain: his spirit had been purified seven times.

Physically, however, a weakness was engendered, which did not desert him for months afterwards, and probably facilitated his progress to the tomb in no small degree. This debility was doubtless fostered by an unwillingness to avail himself of the usual remedies in case of sickness. Much affliction was

encountered, and probably, we might say, induced, by his disregard of the ordinary medical appliances. There were two reasons for this conduct: the first was a determination to spare the society every possible item of expense, and particularly to lessen the cost of maintaining a minister at a period when his services could not be available; the second, an intense persuasion of the efficacy of prayer and faith, and a profound reliance upon the Almighty for succour and relief, independently of all fleshly resources. The first of these motives was generous in principle, but unsound in philosophy; the second did more credit to his faith than to his judgment. Both faults, however, are so rare, and at the same time lean so decidedly "to virtue's side," that few people will be disposed to treat them with much severity. The stubborn fortitude also with which Mr. Bramwell endured affliction, when medical aid might probably have afforded him some mitigation of his pain, gave an heroic cast to the proceeding. During the existence of this illness, one of his sons, who happened to be in London at the time, and who was deeply affected by the sufferings of his parent, resolved to procure the advice of an eminent practitioner on the case. Without communicating his intention to any one, he applied to Dr. Hamilton, stated the patient's condition, and having obtained a prescription, returned home with the medicine. He was not altogether unprepared for some remonstrance, and therefore produced the phials with considerable timidity. But the reception they met with was far more disagreeable than he could ever have imagined. Mr. Bramwell requested that they might be deposited in the fire, and, instead of thanking his son, inflicted a sharp reproof for 'intermeddling' in the matter!—Perhaps the sufferer was at the time exercising so firm a reliance upon spiritual resources, that he might think all human aids and medicaments a positive intrusion upon the holier regimen to which he trusted for his recovery.

Be this as it may, his delicacy continued, and he was therefore earnestly recommended to leave London before the ensuing winter, as the place was supposed to be unfavorable to his health. The counsel proved distressing; for whatever might have been his repugnance to the metropolis on breaking ground there, he had now conceived such an attachment to the society with which he was connected, that the idea of a speedy removal gave him much sorrow. He was 'so blessed among the people,' that he feared to 'grieve God by leaving.' But, as this town residence was found unsuitable to the health of Mrs. Bramwell also, and a return of his disorder was pro-

nounced inevitable if he remained, it was determined to take another circuit at the ensuing Conference. No sooner was this intention made public, than invitations were sent him from many places, and he was thrown into considerable perplexity by the number of applications. But when the proper time came, his steps were directed to Newcastle-on-Tyne, upon which circuit he entered in August 1815—there to continue his campaigns against a worse adversary than Wellington had just encountered on the field of Waterloo.

His ministry in this quarter was commenced under favorable auguries as to his spiritual achievements. In his first sermon he received 'extraordinary power from God;' and in his second and third, had ample proofs that the Divine influence had accompanied him to his new appointment, and was still operating through his instrumentality. At the first love-feast he held, 'the Lord poured out his blessing;' and six or seven persons emerged from darkness into marvellous light. But at the second of these meetings, a still more decisive manifestation took place. The place was quite crowded. At the beginning all were still, and the suspense continued for about an hour. But in an agony of prayer, as he writes, 'the power of God came upon them suddenly. Cries for mercy were heard in every direction. In about an hour and a half not fewer than thirty-six persons found deliverance.' He never witnessed greater glory; he himself was filled with love and rapture. Many persons stood up, with radiant faces and joyful tongues, to tell of the wonderful revolution which had been accomplished within their souls during those few pregnant moments. Very few, indeed, he believes, were left in darkness amidst such an effusion of glory, 'except some who were groaning for redemption;' and of these, several received it subsequently. Of course, he regarded all initial successes as happy tokens of future triumphs. The work would progress, he hoped, as it had commenced; and, if so, his ministry in this circuit might prove even more honorable than it had been in the capital itself. 'The Lord pour out his Spirit upon all,' was his unceasing prayer.

He was not disappointed in his expectations. Scenes like those just detailed frequently occurred under his animating superintendence, and produced a feeling of ecstasy in the souls of many, which it would not be extravagant to characterise as one of the very highest stages of human enjoyment. One of these peculiar 'seasons of refreshing' has been described in glowing language by a partaker. The occasion was a love-feast; the place, the Orphan-house—a building

endeared to Wesleyans, as one of their earliest temples, and still more so, from the remembrances it suggests of the many great and devoted spirits who have made its walls echo to the stirring sounds of the Gospel trumpet. On entering the venerable edifice, the attention was at once riveted by the solemn stillness which prevailed—a stillness which, in a large assembly, is more eloquent and impressive than any laboured utterances; for it showed that all present were bent on some common object, and that something important was anticipated. The customary verses, commemorative of the love of the martyrs, were first sung, and Mr. Bramwell then bent his knees in prayer. But that preliminary silence appeared to brood over his spirit, and to soften his voice; for in a whisper—it was scarcely more, indeed, than a faint breathing, though perfectly audible—he preferred his addresses to the Throne of Grace. The subdued tones in which he spoke, contrasted sublimely with the fervour and sublimity of his petitions. But subdued as they were, they were fraught with the true spiritual electricity. Instead of the loud and sonorous peals, which sometimes marked the bursting of the cloud of blessing, its charge was now streaming upon the assembly with a gentle murmur—which told that, if less tempestuous than usual, it was fully as copious. The genuine fire pervaded the chapel, and hearts melted like wax in that glowing atmosphere. The responses of the people were modulated into harmony with the minister's tones, but they came fast and fervid, and struck upon the ear with extraordinary effect. The spectacle also was singular. Every countenance exhibited proof of the mighty influence which was at work; the streaming eyes, uplifted hands, hallowed looks, and intense emotion of that large company, might have drawn down troops of rejoicing angels to gaze upon one of the noblest sights earth can afford to them—a host of true worshippers. But when the prayer was finished, and the people rose from their knees, there was one person whose heart was completely overpowered by its own rapture; a voice from the midst of the throng, exclaimed, in homely but electrical words, "My friends, I think we're in the very suburbs of heaven!" This sentiment found a prompt confirmation in every breast; one tongue was enough for a large assembly, whose heart was as the heart of one man.—The speaker was William Christer, a pitman by business, but in spirit, a devoted disciple of Christ.

Another meeting, held at Carville, a village near Newcastle, is worthy of mention, though for a different reason. The Wesleyan Society there was a favorite one with Mr. Bramwell.

Under the auspices of the excellent Mr. and Mrs. Reay, who might be deemed its spiritual parents, it had attained a degree of piety and eminence, which fully justified the minister's partiality. His periodical visitations were always seasons of great delight, and such was his high estimate of the Carville community, that he was accustomed to represent it to his distant friends as a model for religious societies. His intimate friend, the late Rev. John Nelson, who was also a great 'revivalist,' but of a somewhat different order, happened to be in the North about this period, and was anxious to test the merits of Mr. Bramwell's pet settlement by personal observation. A meeting was accordingly announced, and a gathering of no common description ensued. Mr. Nelson was appointed to conduct the service, and many attended to hear a preacher, who was so well known to be a powerful coadjutor with Mr. Bramwell in the field of revivalism. The visitor, on his part, obviously expected great things; but it so happened that, from the very commencement of his discourse, he appeared to labour under considerable restraint—to speak in technical language, "he had no liberty,"—his tongue enjoyed none of its usual freedom; his thoughts fell powerlessly upon the audience; there was no fire scattered from his censer: not a soul seemed to be kindled! His embarrassment only increased as he proceeded, until at length, either finding himself too much perplexed to continue his discourse, or hoping to rouse his hearers from their unexpected apathy at a stroke—in this case literally a *coup de main*—he suddenly paused, inflicted a startling blow upon the Bible, and then abandoning his subject entirely, issued the war-cry of the revivalist, so frequently employed in those days:—"All of you that are for Heaven, stand up!" Instead of a general rising, as he anticipated, not an individual stirred! The audience were apparently in doubt, whether it was a summons to which they were to give a literal compliance, or a mere oratorical passage in the regular discourse. Mr. Nelson repeated the blow, and then his injunction, with still more vehemence. All motionless as before! A painful silence ensued; his feelings were doubtless of a very disagreeable character; and scarcely less so, in all probability, were those of Mr. Bramwell, on witnessing his friend's discomfiture. Was not this Carville, in which he gloried?—this the society in whose fervour and ardent devotion he had so often exulted? Quite passive, as if the cry of the revivalist were utterly foreign to their ears? It was not to be borne! He had taken his seat in the singers' pew below, in order to leave the visitor in possession of the field, and now the pro-

tracted suspense, in which the assembly had been plunged, was broken by a repetition of the summons, but in a different and well-known voice. Though the sounds were partially muffled by the hand which Mr. Bramwell held before his mouth, his call operated like magic. In a moment, almost every individual arose; the charm dissolved; frigid hearts grew warm; tongues were unloosed: a burst of emotion was heard, and from that instant the service proceeded in triumph! Both preacher and people were themselves again.

Temporally, however, the prospects of the society were by no means encouraging. At this period much distress prevailed amongst the commercial part of the community, and many members were involved in the misfortunes of the crisis. That God was scourging England for its crimes, he firmly believed, as also that those judgments were fully merited. The suffering he witnessed, but could not alleviate, was productive of exquisite pain to his sympathetic heart. He declares, that if he were to indulge his feelings, it would 'destroy his poor body.' There was 'distress on every side—men's hearts failing them for fear; numbers trembling, others falling.' The national chastisement affected him deeply. 'God,' says he, 'is angry with us: He will punish, and we deserve it. But mark, it is all from Him. I cannot look at second causes. I look at the rod, and see who has appointed it; but the end is not yet. England has had a great day of heavenly visitation: it has been exalted to heaven. The Lord grant it may not be cast down to hell.' All he could do, was to cry 'mightily to God;' and if earnestness and importunity could avail under such circumstances, they were certainly to be found in his supplications for a guilty land, and for a suffering brotherhood.

There was also some affliction in his own family to endure. His excellent wife had been attacked by a dangerous illness just before her removal to Newcastle, and for a while it was doubtful whether she could recover. At length, however, the peril was apparently surmounted, though she was compelled to remain for some time in Yorkshire, until her strength was recruited. She had not been long in Newcastle before a relapse took place, and her health began to fluctuate so alarmingly, that he gave way to the most painful apprehensions. Of course, the prayer of faith, which had so often been presented for the sick, was not wanting for his cherished partner. On one of these occasions, when Mrs. Bramwell was extremely ill, he received an 'intimation,' whilst addressing his Maker, that his wife would recover '*from that time.*' He was correct: since then (he writes), she has recovered in a remarkable

manner; and though the disorder did not entirely desert her, he had no further occasion for serious alarm.

Mr. Bramwell remained two years at Newcastle, and, it would be needless to say, with credit and success. The opinion formed of him by one who had the opportunity of studying his character closely during this period, and whose intellectual attainments, refinement of soul, and dispassionate judgment would have necessarily led him to repudiate whatever was spurious or fanatical, is of the highest value in reference to this part of Mr. Bramwell's career. The gentleman to whom we allude, was the late Charles Newby Wawn, Esq. After perusing Mr. Sigston's Memoir, he writes thus to a friend: "Strange to tell, in these hours of complete disentanglement from everything earthly, and deprivation of mind from all worldly thought and affection, when 'not touch'd but rapt' with the elevating anticipation, the spirit of the holy departed Bramwell always seems to be hovering about me. The world would laugh at this as visionary, and the fruit of enthusiasm; and perhaps it is but fancy, but it is a delightful fancy. It brings me into company of a celestializing kind, night and day; and to which even the most secret thought is perhaps known. How much of God and glory dwelt in the soul of that man, bestowed, no doubt, in answer to never-ceasing prayer—what an amazing restoration of the Divine image in a descendant of fallen Adam—how lucidly shone 'the mind that was in Christ,' in all that he said and did, yet with what simplicity and humility! I am often lost in admiration of the power and goodness of God, as exhibited in the renovation of that earth-born mortal—a compound of sin and dust, like all his fellow-worms, yet wearing the port, and exemplifying the life of an angel through so long a course of years. His like I never met with in this world, and never expect to do so. The imperfect memoir that exists of him, is yet rich in containing so many of his own thoughts and expressions, clothed in the Spartan brevity and terseness of phrase that characterised him, and replete with heavenly wisdom, with holy incentive, and gracious sensibility. I have just gone through it again with great refreshment of spirit. For some days this better class of feeling has so far towered above every other (sufficiently keen and depressing), that could I, in laying down this pen, be allowed with it to lay down my life before to-morrow's sun, I should be greeted by this sainted spirit within the portals of light, and have entered on the rest that remaineth. But the time is short. A little more faith and patience, and the scene will open."

Such an opinion from such a man as Mr. Wawn needs no comment; it is a volume of panegyric in itself.*

During Mr. Bramwell's sojourn in Newcastle, a conviction that his work was drawing to a close appeared to fasten upon his mind. When he entered the circuit he had, as he thought, reason to believe that he should leave it only for Paradise. So strong was the impression, that he mentioned it, without hesitation, to several of his friends. Under this belief, he was making more diligent preparations than ever for glory; every day he was adding to his treasure in heaven. The night, he saw, was fast approaching, and the chilling breath of evening warned him to make haste, and complete his task whilst the light yet remained. 'We shall soon have done with preparing for glory,' he writes.

The stimulus imparted to his spirit by such considerations was extraordinary. He resolved to redeem his time to the utmost: to sleep no more, to eat and drink no more, than nature absolutely required. Nay, he threw aside his books, and began to dispose of them, in order that he might devote his whole attention to the duties yet remaining to be performed. He describes himself as working with all his might. He expresses his determination to fight as long as he could breathe, and to seek souls as if not a single prize had already been gained.

Indeed, at this period he seems to have almost attained the climax of earthly disengagement: he was 'swallowed up' in God. His soul experienced such fellowship with the Father, and enjoyed such familiarity with heavenly things, as he had never known before. He had received what he calls an extraordinary baptism of the Spirit, which only increased his impatience to rush into the glory that was to be revealed. He was ever on the watch for his Lord. 'I wait,' he says, 'to see Him as He is—to behold his glory, to see the number I have known, and who are now with Him. What is all the world, or worlds on worlds, to compare with this? What is labour? What is suffering? What are fire and water, supposing we are called to pass through them? To see the Lamb, and possess everlasting life, overbalance everything else! He never 'had more pleasant walks by faith in the heavenly country.' It was not enough for him to see, with Bunyan's pilgrims, "something like the gate of the celestial city, and

* Mr. Wawn drew up a lengthened essay on Mr. Bramwell's character, but unfortunately the MS. has by some means disappeared. His copy of Mr. Sigston's memoir (for which we are indebted to the politeness of Christopher Wawn, Esq., of South Shields) now lies before us, and exhibits abundant traces of the diligent study to which it has been subjected, being literally studded with his marks and observations.

also some of the glory of the place" through the shepherd's perspective-glass. His vigorous faith enabled him at times to 'see the company' itself—to see 'the heavenly throng waiting for him'—and even 'to live amongst them.' His attitude now was one of triumph. Satan was conquered; he stood with his foot on the neck of his adversary; he felt himself, as it were, just on the brink of eternity, and in this victorious posture waited in full expectation that he should receive 'his crown before next Conference' (1817)!

A few more months passed away, and Conference arrived. Still he was in the flesh—preaching the cross, instead of wearing the crown. His expectation had not been fulfilled; but he clung as fondly to the presentiment of a speedy death as men generally cling to the hope of a protracted life. He maintained that his sojourn in the world could not *now* be of long duration:—his next circuit would surely prove his last!

This next circuit was Salford. For seventeen years the society there had solicited Conference to appoint Mr. Bramwell one of their ministers. They were, of course, delighted to receive him at length; they found that his reputation had not been exaggerated, and that his piety and apostolic zeal were not less than they had been led to expect. He gave them to understand in his first address that his duties as a minister were not confined to the pulpit—he had something to do in their own houses also. 'I shall call upon you,' he said, 'not to eat and drink;' not even to spend time 'in conversation with you on indifferent subjects'—and these indifferent subjects in his view embraced a pretty extensive range of topics—but to make inquiries into the 'state of your souls.' In addition to this domiciliary scrutiny, he determined never to preach, without afterwards meeting the members of the society in particular. His congregations were immense, and from every side he received invitations to deliver 'occasional' sermons. These, however, from a feeling of duty, or a doubt of their strict propriety, he resolutely declined. His heart was in his circuit. On retiring for the night, he has been known to pray for an hour or two for the members and officers. For twenty minutes, says an auditor, the burden of his prayer was—'Oh, God, bless this circuit! Oh, God, bless this circuit!' And after he had lain for some time in bed, he would start up, and renew his supplications with increased earnestness. Nay, at some periods, it is related that he actually employed the whole of the night in fervent prayer for the Divine blessing upon the people amongst whom he was called to toil.

The improvement he witnessed in the society was con-

siderable. Everywhere there was a 'work,' and sometimes 'a glorious work;' scarcely a night was spent in town or country without seeing 'effects.' More than once, as many as twenty souls were installed in the family of Christ at a single meeting. And in the course of a few months, 'some hundreds were added' to the fraternity. To enhance his joy, as regards the prosperity of the society, he announces triumphantly, that his favorite doctrine, 'full salvation, quite clear, was the order of the day!'

For one unhappy class of mortals—apostates—Mr. Bramwell always felt acutely. Their crime was, in his opinion, as it must be in the opinion of all, one of immeasurable turpitude; and their condition therefore fraught with unspeakable peril. With what pleasure, then, did he lead back deserters to the standard of the Cross! His joy was ecstatic when souls were thus doubly withdrawn from the rebel ranks of Satan, and replaced amongst the soldiery of Christ. Occasionally these 'backsliders' were detected, and reclaimed, under peculiar circumstances. One day he went to preach at a village, where he was informed by a friend on whom he called, that the cause of religion had been deeply injured by numerous defections. Several individuals were named; awhile ago they were safe in the fold—now, they were wandering far from their shepherd, and heedless of his voice. The preacher took up his hat, and left the house. It was a cold winter's day: the ground was covered with snow: but, regardless of all personal inconvenience, he went from dwelling to dwelling to seek the wanderers, and exhort them, with tears, to return. One of the number was a female, who lived at some distance from the village. He pushed his way through the snow, and entered the yard attached to the house. The woman came out to him. 'Pray,' said he, 'have you seen a poor lost sheep come this way?'—'No, sir,' was the reply.—'Why,' continued the other, 'a poor sheep has strayed from the fold, and I was told it was somewhere in this direction.' The culprit at once detected the meaning of this brief parable. "She uttered a dreadful shriek," says the relator,* "immediately fell on the ground, and, in all the anguish of sudden remorse, cried out for God to have mercy on her soul. She was taken into the house, where Mr. Bramwell prayed with her, and God was pleased, in great condescension, to heal her backslidings."

Another incident of a similar kind is related by the same individual. Here, however, Mr. Bramwell's singular faculty of discernment was brought into operation. He was meeting

* Mr. Grime, of Manchester.

the society at a small place called Oldfield-Road, at the conclusion of the usual service. After addressing several members successively, he came to a poor woman, who had for many years been a partaker of the Divine favour. What was her spiritual condition—was it well with her soul?—The question appeared to occasion some embarrassment, and she remained silent. He looked at her steadfastly, and seemed to read her very thoughts:—

‘Woman, you have lost your evidence!’—‘I have’—and she burst into tears. ‘And you have lost it *this week!*’ ‘Sir, I have.’ ‘And you have lost it *this week in a passion!*’ ‘It is so!’ Well, there was hope! He began to console her: he proceeded to pray for her; and that same night the poor woman was restored to her forfeited happiness.

But though he was thus doing well in his profession, and winning souls continually, he still had his drawbacks. There were, what he called, weights to carry, with which none but the Lord and himself were acquainted. His fears respecting the ‘connexion’ in some particulars, still troubled him greatly. The dissensions in the body—the apparent tendencies to formality—the consumption of so much time and force in the promotion of mere ‘temporals’ (so he termed them), and particularly of pecuniary temporals—in short, the gradual but fatal conversion, as he thought, of a religion into a mere *ism*—awakened his worst apprehensions, and ‘made him tremble for Zion.’ Things which might have appeared trivial to others, were charged with mischief in the eyes of one whose sense of spirituality was so delicate, and whose aspirations for pure and undefiled religion were so unbounded. No wonder that a minister who believed that entire sanctification might become ‘the order of the day,’ was anxious that the energies of the church should not be frittered away in the management of mere ‘temporals.’

He was also conscious of growing infirmities. His constitution was naturally robust; had it not been so, he must long ago have foundered under the toil and excitement which he voluntarily incurred. But now its vigour was decaying; he was troubled with an asthma, and felt his physical strength so seriously impaired, that he began to contemplate the possibility of his being compelled to retire from active duty, if the coming of his Lord were much longer delayed. This thought was doubly distressing. To tarry in this world was in itself matter of regret; but to tarry here as a disabled soldier of the Cross—a crippled pensioner—without bodily strength to continue the fight as he had done—so long and so resolutely,

would have been the most painful providence of all. And if he *must* live, and living, cease to labour in his vocation, how perplexing to find that though the body failed, the spirit was stronger and healthier than ever; for at this period the freedom he had in preaching, and the blessing which accompanied it, were such as he had 'never enjoyed before;' he was himself astonished at the power which God lent him!

But was he not really approaching his translation? Could he be deceived again? Were not these corporeal infirmities, the harbingers of spiritual emancipation? Was not this increased power in his work the last brilliant outburst of a soul fully prepared for its change, and already reflecting some of the heavenly glory in its rapid ascent to the throne? Months passed away, and yet no summons came; but he would not abandon the cherished conviction, that he was not far from death—that is, from glory,—'everlasting glory,' as he fondly and emphatically repeats in his letters. The summer of 1818 arrived; another Conference was at hand, and still he had not 'received his crown.' Nevertheless, these impressions of approaching dissolution strengthened daily. Writing to one of his sons in the July of that year, he says, 'I have lately been much impressed with these words, "I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand."' I long to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The heavenly world is more than ever in my view. Oh, the change, the glorious change, which must then take place!' Conversing with his friend, Mr. Benjamin Wilkinson, of Sheffield, some months previously, he stated his conviction still more positively. 'I *know* this is the last circuit I shall ever take.' 'But,' replied the other, with surprise, 'you are very well, and likely to live many years yet.' 'No,' he repeated; 'I know this is my last circuit.' His prevision, however, stretched further—he could guess the *manner* of his death. 'I believe,' said he, 'I shall die of an apoplectic fit!'

The best astrologers and diviners have failed in the art of vaticination, when the question was as to their own fate. We shall see whether Mr. Bramwell was more successful in prognosticating his own decease. He had uttered these predictions; that he should die soon—that this should be his last circuit—and that he should die of an apoplectic fit.

It was now Conference time, and he set out for Leeds to attend it (July 1818). As he was passing through Halifax, on his route, he called on a friend, who expressed a desire that he should take an appointment in that circuit next year.

‘My dear brother,’ he replied, ‘before next year you or I will be in eternity!’ And again, when a familiar remark was made by this friend about his hat, which had seen too much service, and a wish was expressed to furnish him with another, he replied, ‘My brother, this hat will serve me as long as I need one.’ It is also a striking little fact, that in a small book employed by him for the purpose of recording the texts from which he preached at various places, the “Salford” column is abruptly terminated, and dotted off as if it were closed for ever. Another memorandum sheet, containing entries referring to this period, is concluded still more decisively: the last item on the page is a minute of a payment he was to make at the Conference.

Arrived at Leeds, he took up his temporary abode with Mr. Sigston,* of Queen’s Square, in whose house he was always a welcome guest. He was diligent in his attendance at the meetings of the Conference; and not only there, but in his private visits, manifested a spirit of such exalted devotion, and obviously enjoyed such intimate intercourse with heaven, that all around him were deeply impressed. The thought of death was inalienable from his mind, and with that thought the fondest anticipations of bliss were ever associated. It flung an air of gladness over his deportment, instead of tinging it with the sombre hues of the grave. Far from investing itself with the funeral shroud and the drapery of death, the spirit seemed to be already clothing itself with the garments of light and the white robes of immortality. His conduct and conversation arrested the attention of all with whom he came in contact;—the one by its gentle dignity and unruffled purity—the other by its cheerfulness and heavenly tendencies. “Mr. Bramwell,” said a brother minister, “behaved like one on whose heart was engraven, ‘Thou, God, seest me.’” Everything about him indicated that his soul was already on the wing. Once, when a remark was made as to the stations amongst a company of preachers, he said, ‘Some of us ought to pray that God would soon grant us a station in heaven.’ Indeed, he told his brethren, on their continuing his appointment at Salford for another year, that they would never have an opportunity of giving *him* any other station, as it was his intention to be in heaven before the next Conference!

On Sunday, the 9th of August, he was at Westgate Hill, near Leeds, where his sister and daughter resided. He

* The compiler of Mr. Bramwell’s Memoirs, and a gentleman for whom the latter entertained an especial regard.

preached in the chapel there from 1 John, iv, 17, 18—"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." He descanted with peculiar fervour on the boldness of believers in the day of judgment. In one of his prayers, he alluded to a communication from above—"Lord, didst thou not this day speak to my heart and say, 'Thou shalt soon be with me to behold my glory?'" Soon! Within a few yards from the place where he then stood, the grave was about to open for its temporary tenant! Within a few days from that time, the cold speechless clay of the preacher would be carried into the burial-place behind him! Had his prevision been complete, he might have forestalled a spectacle of solemn interest, which was to be exhibited just without those very walls on the next Sabbath, and about the self-same hour;—an immense assemblage of mourners—a group of afflicted relatives—a coffin committed to the ground, and the clods of the earth heaped upon the corpse of . . . William Bramwell!

The following day (Monday, 10th), he returned to Leeds, and in the evening preached from Isaiah, xliii, 1-3. "But now thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle on thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour." The crowded auditory to which his solemn discourse upon this subject was addressed, perhaps little thought that before long the preacher would himself be passing through the waters of Jordan, and stemming the cold stream of death. Those lips would soon grow chill, and close for ever. That tongue was yielding its last public utterances. The spirit then scattering its burning thoughts, was about to enter the strange untravelled land of shadows. Already he stood upon the margin—a few more steps, and he would vanish from sight; yet as the mysterious curtain was uplifting, he seemed to turn one lingering look to the world he was about to forsake, and from the very threshold of eternity to pour out the last reserves of his soul in admonishing sinners and encouraging believers!

He finished his sermon, his prayers, and left the pulpit. His work was done: his public mission complete!

The end was at hand.

Tuesday passed—Wednesday came. After attending the last sitting of Conference on that day, he proceeded to Mr. Sigston's house, designing to take his departure on the ensuing morning for Manchester. But Death was nearer than Manchester!

The last evening on earth had at length arrived. It was spent in cheerful and spiritual conversation. A friend or two had stepped in to take leave of him. The thought of a speedy dissolution appeared to be predominant in the mind of the preacher, but not so speedy as it actually proved. Raising his hand, after supper, he said, with a smile, "It strikes me that one of us will be gone in three or four months." Mrs. Sigston observed that *he* was not likely to be the marked individual, as his health was apparently so excellent. He replied, "Several of my friends have died of apoplexy, and I expect to go in the same way." "Perhaps you desire such a mode of dying?" was asked. Again he smiled significantly, but said nothing. Strange prophetic conversation! A few hours would now decide all!

It was late when he retired. He took an affectionate leave of his host, intending to set out on his journey long before the household had risen. The sounds of prayer proceeded for some time afterwards from his bedroom, and his petitions were remarkably fervent. Amongst other ejaculations which were overheard by a gentleman who slept in a neighbouring apartment, was the oft-repeated wish, "Lord, prepare me for thy kingdom, and take me to thyself." Again at two o'clock the same voice was heard—the same wish reiterated. "Lord, bless my soul, and make me ready." At half-past two he left his chamber. A servant had been directed to provide him with breakfast at that hour. He took it with a good appetite, knelt down at its conclusion, and prayed with her. Again the tenor of his supplication was, that he, as well as she, might be fully prepared for heaven. There was now little time for further preparation; the grim messenger was already waiting for his approach! The domestic opened the door for him; he gave her his blessing, and took his departure—for Manchester nominally, for Paradise in reality!—Scarcely a sound was to be heard. Darkness yet hung over the earth as he entered the lane, whose termination he was not destined to reach. Ere the sun should have risen, the disembodied spirit had to traverse the distance which intervenes between this planet and the orb of the blessed. He had a long journey to take before

day could dawn in Leeds ; and when the light should next meet his view, it would be that of a sunrise in eternity !

* * * *

Had there been a spectator present, whose vision extended to spiritual objects, he might perhaps have discovered in the path into which the preacher turned, a huge shape—

“If shape it might be called that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might he called, that shadow seem'd:
* * * * Black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seem'd his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.”

It was indeed the monarch Death—waiting for his prey ! Footsteps were heard in the distance. The impatient monster bounded forward with ‘horrid strides,’—it was the victim who was approaching ! The mortal knew not who was in his path. The distance lessened—only a few steps lay between him, and the most dreaded and indomitable of human foes. Those few steps were soon passed, and the victim stood face to face with the destroyer !

He paused ; was this huge shape Death ? Had the moment of moments arrived ? Was the awful encounter to take place here ?

There was little time for thought. The ‘grisly terror’ levelled his dart, and ‘grinned a ghastly smile.’ He struck—but the blow, though sure, was gentle : no shout of triumph, no malignant exclamation, issued from his lips ; the sting of death had been extracted, and even in that grim countenance there was a gleam of pity and respect ; he knew that he was not unwelcome ! One stroke was enough. The mortal felt the wound, and faltered. The shape vanished.*

* * * *

Two men belonging to the night patrol came up the lane, and found the stricken minister still standing, but supporting himself with his hands upon his knees. One of them asked if anything ailed him. “Yes,” was the reply ; “I am very ill indeed ; take hold of me.” They at once gave him their assistance, and on learning from what house he came, offered to conduct him back again. He consented, and took a single step, but then declared that he could go no further. He soon sank upon his knees, probably in prayer, and when one of his attendants directed the other to run and tell Mr. Sigston, the dying man uttered his last articulation, “Yes, do, for I shall

* It would be unnecessary to remind the intelligent reader of the distinction between literal fact and mere imagination in this part of the work.

not long be here." In a moment or two the domestic from whom he had so recently parted, came shrieking to the spot. He attempted to speak to her, but his tongue had finished its work on earth—speech was at an end. Mr. Sigston and some members of his household soon arrived, and conveyed him to the house, whilst a surgeon was sent for in all haste. But the ties which bound the soul to the body were already severed; the latter returned lifeless to the dwelling it had but just quitted in apparent health—the former was now pushing its way through the dread passes and across the border regions which divide the world of sense from the mysterious realm of spirit.

* * * * *

Is it permitted to follow him a little further in imagination?

As earth receded from view, eternity with all its marvels—its strange spectacles—its novel phenomena burst upon his astonished sight. The scales had fallen from his eyes:—nay, the vision of the body itself had ceased, and he now saw with the soul alone. All before him was new; all around him was changed, and still changing. He was now free: he had shaken off the flesh with all its encumbrances; the spirit had left its prison-house of clay, and was at liberty to enter the Promised Land. The 'great mystery' would soon be perfectly solved. In another moment he should stand before his Creator, and gaze upon the mighty sovereign of all worlds. He pressed onwards. He had already trodden the gloomy paths of the Valley of the Shadow: Jordan's stream was darkly rolling around him: he plunged fearlessly through; its foaming billows were gallantly breasted; the further shore was gained,—and with a shout of triumph he leaped upon the soil of Paradise! The first sound he heard was a rapturous burst from thousands of angelic tongues—there was joy in heaven that another child of mortality had finally escaped. The first sight he beheld was the city of the Great King, which rose before him in unspeakable splendour. From its gates there issued some "shining ones," sent to welcome the happy stranger, and to conduct him to the presence of his God and their God. But with what pleasure did he greet them, when he discovered that they were *not* strangers, but children in Christ.—His works had verily gone *before* him!

And yet, as he entered the golden city, and passed through the 'pearly gate,' would he not cast one look behind? Where was earth *now*? Yonder, in the distance—a black and fearful sight indeed, as seen in its shroud of guilt from the battlements of Heaven; but—he had done with it for ever! Where was the terrible enemy who had pursued him with such implacable

hostility through every lane and avenue of life? Left raging impotently on the other side of the stream of death! Where was the pit of destruction, into which a band of unclean spirits had incessantly laboured to drag him? It was eternally escaped! What had become of sorrow? It had ceased! Of peril? It was past! Tears? They were dried for ever! Trial? It had terminated in victory!

Could this indeed be true, or was it not rather a splendid shadowy dream? No—he had only to look before him! There was the goal—reached; the crown—won; the prize—in his hand; heaven—he was in it!

And the King of kings? He lifted his eyes, and beheld HIM IN HIS BEAUTY.

* * * * *

Such was the death of the righteous! *Death?* No, said one of Mr. Bramwell's friends, the Rev. Henry Moore, "we can scarcely call it death, it appears almost a *translation*."

And now as to the body:—on the following Friday a hearse stood at the door of Mr. Sigston's house. Crowds were assembled around it, and the road was thronged with vast numbers of people belonging to different religious denominations. They had come to pay the last mark of respect to a departed saint, although no public announcement respecting the interment had been made. The Dead was brought forth, and ushered into the funeral car. The immense multitude formed itself, as by instinct, into a solemn procession, and moved onward. First came the hearse, then the ministers who yet remained in Leeds after the close of the Conference—two and two, according to seniority: next a series of local preachers, in the same order; and afterwards an assemblage of Christians belonging to the Wesleyan and other communities. The road also was thickly lined with spectators. Slowly advancing, this procession was augmented at every step, and when it entered Briggate, its sombre length stretched from the top to the centre of that extensive street. It wound through the town in solemn silence until it reached the outskirts, when a prayer was offered by Dr. Taft, and hundreds of deep voices united in singing that exquisite pæan—

"There all the ship's company meet,
Who sailed with their Saviour beneath:
With shouting each other they greet,
And triumph o'er trouble and death," &c. &c.

The vast crowd then dispersed, and the Dead went on his way towards the grave already dug to receive him.

On the following Sunday (August 16), people might be seen flocking to Westgate Hill from various parts of the country, in order to attend the interment. Some thousands of persons* were soon assembled in the vicinity of the burial-place. Amongst these were many who had travelled from Sheffield, and other places still more remote. Not only the young and active, but the old and infirm, had traversed great distances, to see the relics of a revered pastor or spiritual parent consigned to the tomb. A burning and a shining light had been quenched in Israel; but round its ashes were now collected many whose lamps had been kindled at its flame. A sermon was preached on the ground adjoining the chapel, by the Rev. G. Highfield, from Matt. xxiv, 44. "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." At its conclusion, the corpse was lowered into its narrow resting-place amidst the sobs and sighs of the immense assemblage. The dull heavy sound of the falling clods thrilled through the hearts of the bystanders, and proclaimed with mournful eloquence that the holiest earth must return to earth, as the proudest dust must crumble again into dust. The voices of the living were raised to sing that beautiful hymn—

"Who are these arrayed in white," &c.

but as they proceeded, the huge mass of sound grew unsteady; it reeled and fluctuated, from excess of emotion; at every line it appeared to droop, and lessen in volume, until at length it broke off into a convulsive wail, and then was rather sobbed than sung. Mr. Nelson and Dr. Taft† then addressed the sorrowing multitude; the throng broke up; and in a short time the burial-place was deserted,—the dead was left alone. The grave had swallowed up another victim, yet gained no victory. Corruption had conquered—yet but till the trumpet of Resurrection shall sound, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and be clothed with immortality and everlasting life.

* I believe *ten* thousand persons were collected from different parts."—Rev. George Sargent, whose amiable widow still resides within a mile or two of the spot.

† Dr. Taft had been appointed to the Salford circuit by the Conference, which had just terminated; but, instead of renewing his intercourse with one whom he revered as a parent, death deprived him of all but the melancholy satisfaction of accompanying the relics of his old friend to the tomb. This year proved a melancholy one for the Wesleyan body. Between the Conferences of 1817 and 1818, no less than six and twenty ministers were snatched away, and amongst the number, several who were still youthful, and had given symptoms of excellent promise. Three more were taken in the month of August (1818): viz. Mr. Bramwell, the Rev. Samuel Bardsley (also appointed to Manchester), and the eminent R. C. Brackenbury, Esq., of Raithby Hall, Lincolnshire.

A simple epitaph is inscribed on the tablet which is reared over his grave :—

HERE LIETH WHAT WAS EARTHLY,
 OF THE VENERABLE WILLIAM BRAMWELL,
 A CHOSEN, APPROVED, AND VALIANT MINISTER OF CHRIST,
 WHO DIED AUGUST 13, A.D. 1818, AGED 59.
 STRANGER ! WHEN THOU APPROACHEST THIS SHRINE,
 CONSECRATED TO HIS MEMORY
 BY AN AFFLICTED FAMILY,
 MAY HIS ASHES STILL PROCLAIM,
 WHAT HE LIVED TO PUBLISH :
 “PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.”

There are yet extant other inscriptions engraved on the ‘fleshly tablets’ of living hearts ; and these attest still more emphatically the worth and works of the deceased.

And there are also other hearts, not on earth but in Heaven, on which a glowing testimony to the zeal and fidelity of this minister has been imperishably imprinted.

The following sonnet was written over his grave by one of his family :—

“MORE THAN CONQUEROR.”
 Behold the Victor’s grave!—the battle o’er ;
 The arrowy storm of strife for ever past ;
 The summer’s sigh—the winter’s moaning blast—
 Unheeded sweep along the vale : no more
 The crimson banner floats that erst he bore ;
 His war-cry “ONWARD” hush’d, and overcast
 The gleaming of his trenchant sword :—at last
 Ungirt the radiant panoply he wore,
 The red-cross warrior sinks in honour’s bed :—
 The fight is finish’d, and the field is won !
 Laurel may crown the earthly conqueror’s head,
 And song heroic chant what *he* hath done :
Thou, “more than Conqueror !” thy glories shed
 A splendour brighter than the mid-day sun !





CHAPTER VII.

CHARACTER—Singleness of Purpose—Perpetual Progress—Christian Perfection—Purification—Home in Heaven—Waiting for Azrael—Views from Pisgah—Religious Ambition—Humility—Dependence upon Heaven—Faith—Prayer—Nights of Prayer—Absorption into Deity.

A living sermon of the truths he taught.—DRYDEN.

It is only when a foreign power takes possession of a man, and impels him forward, and dwells within him in place of his own energy, that true and real existence first takes up its abode in his life. This foreign power is ever the power of God. FICHTE.



THE character of such a man as Mr. Bramwell is far too simple and homogeneous—if the word may be allowed—to present many of those peculiarities which give interest and piquancy to mental portraiture. There is little variety, and less antithesis, to be discovered in its minute details. There are no striking incongruities—no grateful discords—no happy groupings of dissimilar properties. It is a character in which there appears little breadth, but much intensity. To employ a scientific figure, the light which he emitted—or, to speak more properly, the light which he reflected—sustained no dispersion: it was a pure, steady, concentrated flame. Had it been scattered into numberless contrasting hues and colours, by the irregularities of the medium through which it passed, the spectacle might have been far more picturesque; but the warmth and illumination produced would have been far less powerful. A man with one thought—one work—one aim, is not the best subject for a biographical portrait-painter; yet this is the most noticeable feature in the physiognomy now under consideration. A *singleness of purpose* was the fact which first arrested the attention. What that purpose was, none who ever exchanged a few words with him, could long mistake. Dr. Johnson said of Burke, that you could not meet him under a shed whilst seeking shelter from rain, without discovering that he was a

man of uncommon genius. It would have been almost as difficult to meet Mr. Bramwell under similar circumstances, without perceiving that he was a man of uncommon piety. It was apparent that he was a being wholly dedicated to Heaven. He bore the badge—the cognizance—of his Master at all times. The service to which he belonged was scarcely less evident than it would have been had his brow been visibly lettered with the Divine superscription, or had his face shone like that of Moses on his descent from the Mount. If the halo with which the old painters invested the head of a saint, had been a real attribute instead of a poetical fancy, a glory of no mean lustre would have rested upon his; and though in splendour it might have yielded to some, yet, in steadiness and constancy, it would have been surpassed by few. To find him, without soon finding yourself in the Presence also was difficult. You were irresistibly transported in thought to another region. His appearance was suggestive of a higher state for which he was preparing. He looked like one who was on a journey, and too much in haste to waste time on the trifles of earth. The pilgrim's staff—the worn sandals—the dusty garments—the hurried step—the abstracted look, all told that he was but passing through a strange country, and travelling to another and a distant land. Whither, was the question his appearance suggested? He would stop to answer *that!* To a land of promise, where tears are no more shed, and where sorrow never comes—to a city which has foundations, and whose builder is the living God—to a house not made with hands—to an inheritance which is incorruptible—to that eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God! Yes, and he would also stop to point out the way, and, if willing, to take you along with him. But come what might, his own mind was made up: *he*, at any rate, would reach heaven, and from the hour when he became fully alive to the importance of this aim, to the moment when his foot dipped into the chilling waters of death, he pursued his course with a simplicity and steadiness of purpose such as are rarely exhibited. Fiction has told us of vessels at sea, drawn onwards by some mysterious influence—their speed increasing as they advanced—their track a straight line, from which no deviation could be effected—their goal for a long time unknown and invisible: but at last a huge rock appears in the distance—it is an enormous magnet! In this (to change the figure) we have an emblem of the career of Mr. Bramwell. Once brought under the influence of the distant and viewless loadstone, to which

all that is good and pure on earth must ever tend, his bark sped rapidly over the troubled sea of time. Its path was as straight as the arrow's flight. Neither perverse winds nor boisterous waves could change its course or retard its progress. It toiled onwards, through storm and calm, gloom and sunshine, night and day, until at last the great Rock of Ages rose before him in palpable majesty; and that was the end of his voyage!

The doctrine of *progress* was, in fact, an especial favorite with him. Life, and especially religious life, was, in his view, perpetual motion. 'No man,' says he, 'as a Christian, should be found on the same spot two days together.' In a *month* much might be done—so much, that he thought it possible the believer might advance sufficiently far to entitle himself to 'a double weight of glory.' Hence he insisted strongly upon the practical application of this doctrine. It was clear to him that quiescence, if desired, if attempted, was impracticable. It was useless therefore to seek it, if it could not be had. The old, but still unregarded truth, that "if man is not rising to the angel he is always sinking to the devil"—to state it in Coleridge's language; or in Young's—

"If man can't mount, he will descend"—

is one of paramount importance in spiritual life. *There*, safety can only be secured by progression. To stand still in appearance, is to slide back in reality. Nay, progression itself will not suffice, unless it be swift and steady. The languid, loitering pilgrim may find himself in the position of Arctic travellers prosecuting their journey across an immense field of ice, and discovering at night that whilst *they* have been advancing northward all day, the field itself has been in more rapid motion southward; thus placing them at a greater distance from the Pole than when they first set out. Certainly, few men ever gave a more literal colouring to the Scripture metaphor of 'running the race,' set before us. It was his aim to keep himself at 'full speed.' 'When I do so,' says he, 'for one day only, I see the ground I have gone over.' His progress was thus rendered perceptible, not only by intervals of years and months, but of days, and almost hours. 'Oh, how swiftly we *may* run,' he exclaims, 'even in this world!'—'Oh, how swiftly this man *did* run,' the spectator might have remarked. "He was, indeed, one of those," said Dr. Taft, "who seem so far to have outstripped their competitors in the Christian course, as to have distanced them and a world of sinners." But, perhaps, the most

decisive evidence of his continual progress is afforded by his letters. The word 'never' is repeated until it grows fatiguing : — 'never nearer Heaven'—'never so much within the court as at present'—'never so much tempted'—'never had such a view of eternity.' He always writes in the superlative, because at the moment he really was in advance of all his past experience, and because he had then attained a state, in comparison with which his former acquirements were partial and palpably inferior. We may say that he was not exactly the same person for two days together: the William Bramwell of to-day had outrun the William Bramwell of yesterday.

Not a little stimulus to proceed thus, was derived from the doctrine of Christian perfection. He wished believers to labour as if this 'privilege' were within the reach of all; but never to delude themselves by supposing that they had attained anything like the climax of earthly purity. 'Never imagine,' he writes, 'that you have arrived at the summit. No; see God in all things, and you will see NO END.' Whatever may be the theoretical merits of this doctrine of perfection, there is considerable policy and practical worth in the principle of constant, *indefinite* progression. "A man," said Cromwell, "never rises so high as when he knows not whither [how far] he is going." If his goal is out of sight, he cannot safely relax his efforts for a moment. People are more apt to measure the ground they have gone over, than to consider what remains to be traversed. Religion has no more dangerous evil to encounter than the deceptive *mirage* which builds up a shadowy city of rest at no great distance, and lulls the traveller into security when the desert is but half trodden. Those who aim at things distant, may, at any rate, reach others less remote. "Shoot at the moon," says the old Persian proverb, "and you may hit the clouds." The "*aliquid immensum, infinitumque*"—something vast and infinite—will be the aim of every true Christian, as it was of the eloquent Roman. To Mr. Bramwell, the fear of 'sinking' was intolerable; the duty of rising, imperative. 'To rise,' he says, 'is *our* duty, as it is also *His* command'—'never sink.'

It was not therefore surprising that a spirit constantly employed in the work of progress and purification, should ultimately exhibit a degree of beauty which the observer might almost deem angelic. Daily, some taint of earthliness was removed, and deeper hues of heavenliness imparted. Hour by hour, some particle of corruption seemed to be dismissed, and some particle of holiness, as it were, substituted. Whilst on this world, the soul was already changing—within

the limits of mortal exaltation—from one degree of glory to another. “Oft converse with heavenly habitants began to cast a beam on the outward shape.” Dr. Taft states, that “for the last two or three years in particular, he was like a shock of corn fully ripe, and fit for the heavenly garner; or, to make use of a different figure, he was a tree of light, whose vigorous and luxuriant branches were weighed down with a diversity of the richest, ripest fruit. There was an increasing degree of tenderness and affection in his spirit. His full soul was like a spring continually overflowing with the most amiable, heavenly, and benevolent emotions. Never did I behold a fallen child of Adam whose moral renovation was so complete, nor one who was so angelic and saint-like. He appeared to be everything his Lord designed him to be.”

Indeed there was so much of devotion in his habits, and his mind appeared to be so constantly occupied with heavenly things, that some might naturally suppose he did not give due attention to temporal matters and the business-duties of life. At a friendly party, we have seen, he would often manage to convert social relaxation into spiritual ‘wrestling.’ On ‘quarter-days’ he endeavoured to despatch the more secular part of the work with all possible rapidity, in order that the remainder of the time might be spent in prayer and religious improvement. And at other public meetings, he was careful to avoid, as far as lay in his power, everything like pointless conversation or unprofitable debate. If in all this there was any fault, the rarity of the offence and the paucity of such offenders, should form some kind of excuse. Mr. Bramwell might, perhaps, be too much abstracted from this world occasionally: but his absenteeism was neither the result of that religious arrogance which sometimes induces a person to look contemptuously upon secular drudgery, nor of that religious ecstasy which has been known to carry the dreamer into a region from which he could scarcely find his way back to earth. As for the duties of life, however mean or obscure, he did not slight them: he would have pursued his original vocation to the last, and with all his characteristic earnestness, had he believed that a secular employment was the appointment of Providence. Even in those trivial matters which are frequently neglected by others, he could exhibit the most scrupulous exactitude. If there were any meeting to attend, none could be more precise or punctual than he: the proper time was calculated with as much care as if he had been a busy tradesman whose minutes were money: stick, hat, and watch would be laid ready on the table, and if

there were a brief interval to spare, it was spent in prayer or profitable conversation with his family. And though it is not often that men have succeeded so well in mounting to heavenly places, and enjoying a rapturous vision of the Divine glory, yet he could get down again whenever it was necessary, and return to the battle and the toil of existence, without a moment's delay. If you saw him dimly, as it were, at the very summit of John Nelson's dream-built ladder,* when his business was with heaven, you might also see him descend both safely and rapidly, whenever there was work for him to do at the foot. With all his loftiness and abstraction of soul, he was still a plain practical labourer in God's vineyard; and always as ready to toil with the pruning-hook, or at the Gospel-plough, as he was to sit down to a banquet of heavenly manna, or to dream of mansions in paradise. It is true, that his real home was not to be found on any terrestrial map. His treasure had already been transferred, and his heart had emigrated to a country far beyond the precincts of this terrestrial sphere. But it was this very familiarity with things unseen, and the free communication which he had with the place of his affections, that enabled him so effectually to "allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way." He did not merely *point* others to the goal: he *ran before them*, and offered an example which served not only to guide but to stimulate his followers. Yet the man who was so frequently sitting in heavenly places, was not content with such partial and imperfect enjoyment. He was always longing to depart from earth, and take up his permanent abode in the mansion prepared for him in the skies. For some years before his death especially, this wish became the passion of his soul; and during the latter part of his career, it actually shaped itself (as we have seen) into a kind of prophetic assurance. What he desired he soon believed. His letters, towards the close of his life, contain many solemn statements respecting his approaching decease, which evince an extraordinary faith in his own persuasions.

True, the happy translation was not permitted so soon as he expected. He was compelled to wait from day to day, and to endure the sickness of disappointed hope. He was too submissive to murmur; but had he been disposed to repine at any circumstance, this would have been the greatest of his regrets. Month after month passed away—still no summons. Years also—but he continued a prisoner in the flesh. His ear was constantly on the rack to catch the sound of Azrael's

* See Mr. Nelson's dream, related in Chapter II.

footsteps. When affliction came, it was hailed as the probable harbinger of the great change. If it swept over him, and left him still in the body, he looked back upon it with sadness, and exclaimed, 'Oh! why might I not then have gone?' Many a fervent prayer was preferred, of which the text and burden was, 'Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.' The wish, ever trembling in his heart, was for a speedy death and a glorious promotion.

But meanwhile if he could not pass over Jordan into the promised land, he might still behold it in the distance from the top of Pisgah. This was his favorite occupation—there was his favorite haunt. Several times a day he went up, that he might survey, as he said, 'his large estate.' Released from his more public and practical employments, he flew at once to the mount. He climbed it with hasty steps and throbbing heart. Standing upon its summit, his eye swept rapidly over the region which lay extended beneath, and fastened upon the distant horizon. There—as the spiritual vision cleared itself from the mistiness of earth—a spectacle of glory was gradually unfolded to the rapt observer. Faintly he could trace the outlines of a magnificent city, with walls of jasper, and foundations glittering with all manner of precious stones. Its gates were of pearl, its buildings of pure gold, and its streets like unto transparent glass. A light "as of setting suns" dwelt upon it, "for the glory of God did lighten it." It was indeed the city of the Great King, the holy Jerusalem, glowing in all the radiance of the eternal luminary who is the "light thereof." To the vivid imagination of the gazer, this brilliant mirage of the soul was complete. He listened, and fancied he could hear the "harpers harping with their harps;" the loud-voiced angels singing their anthems of praise; and then the universal burst from every creature in Heaven, as if each tongue moved, and each string trembled to the mighty chorus of "Blessing and honour, and glory and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." Nay, the piercing eye of faith could even discern the bright forms, the shining ones, which dwelt in the city, or went in and out at its ever-open gates. More than this, he sometimes seemed to 'take pleasant walks by faith in the heavenly country,' to 'enter the city' itself, and not only to 'see the company,' but to 'live for some moments in blessed fellowship with the glorified.' It was then he felt entranced. 'The world, nay, the church itself, were almost forgotten,' and self was virtually annihilated as he gazed on the transporting spectacle!

But, mixed with his rapture, there was regret. When reflection returned, he was still standing on the mountain-top—*here*; whilst yonder—yonder—far in the distance, lay the promised land! Much as he longed to go up and possess it, he could not yet depart. Ah, no—look what is between! A waste ‘howling’ wilderness stretches between Pisgah and Paradise. There is a vale of tears still to be traversed. There is a dreary region peopled with phantoms of evil, and haunted by shapes of darkness to be trodden. And yonder, too, at its confines, rolls the dark swelling Jordan. None beckon to him from the further shore. His hour is not yet come—his work is not finished. Finished? No—hark to the roar of the devouring lion, and the shriek of the perishing soul! There are cries for help—the sheep are being scattered, and where is the shepherd? Can he remain gazing, though on such a golden vision, and longing, though for such a glorious translation, when the enemy is destroying immortal victims? He cannot! He rushes from the mount, plunges anew into the contest, strives to tear the prey from the jaws of the devourer, and if he can but rescue another sinner from destruction, deems his imprisonment in the flesh a still worthier though less happy lot, than an immediate removal to Paradise.

Nor was he simply anxious to mingle with the spirits of the blessed. He had his ambition—an ambition more daring and insatiate than usually actuates poor mortals. In *this* world he ‘laboured to live as near to God as any one he had ever known, yea, as near as St. Paul himself.’ He wished to be ‘as holy as David, serious as Jeremiah, zealous as Paul, and as loving as John.’ In the *other* world, his ardent wish was to be near the throne, to receive the greatest attainable glory, and to stand amongst the very foremost of the celestial hierarchy. The first or sixth heaven would not suffice, if it were possible to obtain admission to the inner circles. The seventh—the highest heaven—was his aim. He must be admitted into the ‘first orders of glory.’ ‘Nay,’ says he, in one of his letters, ‘I am striving every day to secure, as far as possible, the first degree in glory!’ Bold aspirations, it may be thought, for one of the most unpretending of mortals! This lowly follower of Christ was actually nourishing an ambition far loftier than that of an Alexander or a Pope Hildebrand. He had made the rare discovery, that all true grandeur belongs to the future, and is only to be found beyond the grave. ‘To be great in this world,’ he says, ‘is nothing; but to be great in the sight of Jehovah—to be proclaimed in heaven as great—to be crowned with glory, and had in ever-

lasting remembrance with God—to contemplate the Divine perfections, and to stand before the throne—how glorious! Truly, there is something sublime in such an ambition as this! It vaults over the whole earth, and fastens upon the solid honours and glittering prizes of the future. The fading laurels of this world would never satisfy a being who was aiming at nothing less than a crown such as sparkles on the brow of an archangel. Greatness here is too frequently a prelude to degradation elsewhere. The kings, captains, and mighty ones of this transitory state may afterwards become the very pariahs of the universe. Twenty or fifty years of eminence—an eternity of infamy! Surrounded by slaves and flatterers here—by tormentors hereafter! It is a sad mistake, even in this world, to treat wealth, rank, honour, or power as the true objects of human aspiration; but infinitely more sad to imagine that these are merits which will pass current in the land of spirits, or purchase either precedency or impunity in the world to come.

There was, notwithstanding, the profoundest *humility* united with this soaring ambition. Nor is there any paradox in such an association, however incongruous the two sentiments may appear. Just as deep learning produces a conviction of deeper ignorance, so a genuine ambition awakens a spirit of still more genuine modesty. The mortal who was boldly aspiring to one of the 'highest places in heaven,' was content with the lowest on earth. He could emulate the great St. Paul, and yet was sometimes ashamed even to 'look at him.' He was almost absorbed in God, yet reproaching himself because his love was so little, and crying constantly that he might 'receive a thousand times more of it.' The preacher who wielded the thunders of the law, and shook the sinner's heart with such resistless power, trembled with distrust as he performed his task. The suppliant whose prayers were so mighty, was himself continually soliciting the intercession of others on his behalf; and though he often left his bed at midnight to address his Maker, yet condemned himself that the 'feathered songsters of the grove were awake, and employed in the praises of God before he arose.' He who longed so ardently to depart, and by faith could even enter the blest country and mingle with its glorious company, was always curbing his impatient spirit with the jealous inquiry, 'Am I ready? Am I ready to leave the world at this moment?' Rich as he was in the favour of the Almighty, and feasting more frequently than others on angel's food, he was continually lamenting his 'leanness.' Though he had triumphed

over so many temptations, and carried on so dauntless a war against sin and Satan, he could yet tremblingly pray 'that he might not run from his God at last.' He could not but perceive that his ministry was highly successful, and yet it was impossible to detect anything like complacency or self-approbation in his bearing. If any man can be honoured, it is certainly when God selects him as a distinguished agent, and bestows an extraordinary measure of the spirit. But instead of standing before the people as a deserving individual, he appeared only as a favoured instrument. All the merits of the work were his Master's—all the deficiencies his own. He spent his life in the service of Christ, and multitudes have acknowledged him as their spiritual parent or teacher; yet he could write to a brother minister, 'What have we done? All seems nothing. I have stood to look back on my works, but I cannot fix my mind on *one* that yields joy.'

This humility produced a feeling of *dependence upon Heaven* which was touching, from its child-like simplicity. He seemed to nestle beneath the wings of Providence. All his care was cast upon the mighty Creator. Everything was referred to his Divine Parent. Not only in matters of importance, but in those of little moment, he consulted the oracle. When friends sought advice from him, he sought it from God. If the answer were not prompt, if its terms were vague, or his own interpretation unsatisfactory, he flung himself again before the mercy-seat, and pleaded until the difficulty were decided. But if prayer did not prevail, fasting was super-added. And rarely did it happen that this energetic suppliant was refused the counsel he sought. Such a suitor, availing himself of the sanctioned violence which always challenges the ear of heaven, could not be easily dismissed. It was sometimes curious to observe the manner in which he dealt even with secular trifles, as they might be supposed. A question was asked him by a friend:—the preacher fell on his knees—the matter was formally submitted to the Almighty, and in time an answer came. 'Brother,' said he, to the astonished applicant, who might think the point unworthy of such a treatment, 'you must do thus and thus.' So the oracle enjoins! The Providence, indeed, he worshipped, was not merely that which marshals worlds, or manages empires; it was the Providence which also superintends sparrows, and registers human hairs. It was a Providence which would feed and clothe the body, as well as tend the soul.* It was a

* How strangely our conventional notions have been transferred, even to the Deity! The scale of worth which is in use on earth, is seemingly attributed to heaven. There are

Providence which did not refuse to purvey even for his wardrobe. When some article of apparel grew dilapidated, and the question was asked how another was to be procured, he answered, with a solemnity which left no doubt of his meaning, 'Oh, it will come!' And, singularly enough, things *did* come. Just at the moment when they were most required, they were frequently sent without any intimation as to the source from which they proceeded. One of these little incidents is well remembered by a member of the family. He had hinted to his parent, at a time when the garb of the latter was exhibiting symptoms of decay, that it was highly necessary to provide himself with another suit. 'Oh, it will come,' replied Mr. Bramwell, with a confident smile. Not long afterwards a parcel, containing every requisite for a complete renovation of his attire, was left at the house. He never learnt to whom he was indebted for this kindness, nor could he form any satisfactory conclusion respecting the generous individual. In fact, perfect secrecy in such matters was essential to their success; for although Mr. Bramwell lived in a day when the tie between the minister and his flock was perhaps more affectionate and familiar than it is at present, and though such acts of civility and benevolence were certainly more frequent then than now, yet he made it a point to decline all manner of presents whenever it was possible for him to do so.

This perfect dependence upon the power of the Almighty necessarily involved profound *Faith*. Here lay, in a great measure, the secret of his strength, and therefore of his success. There is, perhaps, no Christian virtue which furnishes a better test of Christian excellence. It is the merit which comprehends all other merits. Perfect faith *means*, because it produces, everything else. In this respect, Mr. Bramwell was eminently practical. In most things, indeed, he was what may be called a business-like Christian; he did his work as promptly and pointedly as he possibly could—always took the shortest route, and put his resources to the best purpose. He therefore wielded this simple but magical implement with wonderful effect. He made, if not the most of it, yet more than thousands less energetic than himself have done. It was

few who can fully and practically realize the doctrine of a minute Providence. In great matters—so called—we recognise the hand of God without hesitation: in small ones, according to human estimate, we think it almost impiety to discover anything like Divine action or interposition. As if our 'great and small' were infallible meters of the great and small above! The Providence which most men acknowledge is one that deals with globes and nations, with fortunes, lives, and catastrophes: the Providence which William Bramwell worshipped dealt with everything, and to this therefore he could refer the least and loftiest matters, the beginning and the end of all events. "Hinc omne principium: huc refer exitum."

in praying especially that his faith was exhibited with the greatest prominence. With him, prayer was not a kind of speculation upon Divine assistance—not a mere hope that some act might, or even an expectation that it *would*, be done; but a firm conviction that, unless the thing desired were incompatible with the arrangements of Providence, it *MUST* be granted. It was only necessary to pray aright (subject to that condition), in order to succeed. In a word, he adopted and practised literally the injunction of our Saviour—"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Hence the confidence with which he addressed his Maker—he went *boldly* to the Throne of Grace. His energy of belief startled the hearers. Some might deem it presumption; others, an overweening estimate of his own powers. But if so, the prompt and extraordinary answers which he frequently received, proved that this holy violence was not unblest. Anecdote after anecdote in illustration, has already been related. Many more are still extant; and others—probably not the least remarkable—were recorded in the journals which he destroyed. However incredible they may appear, it must be remembered that the stories are detailed by different individuals, and that there is a striking resemblance in their general outline. Perhaps every circuit in which he travelled could furnish instances, all agreeing in contour, many even in circumstances.

It was no ordinary matter to listen to such a pleader. The earnestness displayed, attracted and enchained the attention. He prayed almost as Michael Angelo sculptured; the chisel moved with such energy that the chips flew round the statuary like the spray of a fountain, and enveloped him in a cloud of marble dust. He struggled like Jacob of old with the angel. He went to work as a true spiritual wrestler. His whole soul was in the task. It might be said, if the phrase has not almost degenerated into religious cant—he 'agonized in prayer.' The process, indeed, was suggestive of antagonism: there was some resistance to be overcome—some *vis inertiae* at least to be vanquished. Hence the interest which his more impassioned efforts excited. There was all the wild charm of an adventurous conflict. He appeared to be grappling with some powerful opponent. The struggle might be long and desperate; for at times his faith was amply tested, and then the physical man revealed the travail of his soul; the perspiration hung on his brow, and his frame heaved with excitement, but his energy also increased with the resistance. He had laid firm hold upon the angel, and would not let him go until

he prevailed. 'When my heavenly Father,' he would say, 'condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold on himself, I do not easily let him go; no, not until I am favoured with an answer.' With the modest pertinacity of Abraham pleading for the cities of the Plain; with the stubborn bravery of Jacob wrestling with his opponent until break of day, he would continue the contest until "the Lord went his way," or the blessing were fully granted. Or to change the figure, he was a man who went boldly up to the door of God's treasury, and seeing there the golden inscription "knock and it shall be opened," complied with the injunction in its most literal signification. He knocked loudly and fearlessly. If no answer, he knocked again, and with still more vehemence. Did no one come? Then the door quivered beneath his blows! The tempter might whisper in his ear 'No admittance to-day.' But the tempted would lift his eyes to the legend which glittered over the portal, "Knock and it SHALL be opened." What did *that* mean? Had not the finger of God traced those characters? Was He a man that he should lie? The applicant therefore redoubled his efforts; his strokes followed each other with a rapidity and violence which told that he would not be denied: the clamour was irresistible:—suddenly the door was unbolted, and as the triumphant suitor bounded in, a voice of welcome was heard—"to him that knocketh it is opened!" William Bramwell's knock at that door was well known, and often heard.*

The power which he possessed in this exercise was admitted by all to be most extraordinary. His petitions seemed to unstop the floodgates of heaven, and "let down a stream of glory on the consecrated hour." Something superhuman and divine appeared to steal over the company. People knelt with ordinary feelings—as on-earth: they afterwards rose as if already in Paradise. It was pretended of Jamblichus by his disciples (as it has been of others), that when he prayed, he was lifted from the ground, and remained without support in the air. Such might almost have been said of William Bramwell, with this addition, that he was not only elevated himself, but in spirit carried his associates with him to the same altitude. They ascended so high at least, that a celestial atmosphere appeared to be substituted for the gross terrestrial

* Writing to a friend, Mr. Bramwell says, "All is yours, and *you may have your all.*" How? "Knock often, knock hard, and come boldly."—"Knock hard at the gate of heaven . . . and if God open not the first, or second, or twentieth, or the hundredth time, yet, with Peter, continue knocking; let God know, as it were, that thou art resolved to take no denial to thy petition . . . This was the greatness of the poor woman of Canaan's faith, she would not be denied."—THOMAS CASE.

element. An illustration is furnished by the Rev. John Morris, a brother minister. This gentleman once visited Mr. Bramwell at Manchester, when, after some religious conversation, the two knelt down together, and continued in prayer for nearly two hours. "The Lord," says the narrator, "drew near to us in all the strong attractions of his grace, and I was ready to think myself in heaven. Mr. Bramwell frequently said, 'Lord, I am in heaven. Lord, what art thou to do with me? Oh, what numbers of angels in this room. I am just where I would be; I would not change my situation for the world. I am just in heaven!' These were the expressions he continually used."

But the strangest feature to be noted in connexion with this subject is, that on some occasions, the remarkable influence developed was produced without audible prayer. His companions were powerfully affected, although all continued silent. His presence *on his knees* seemed to be sufficient. Take the following instance. Whilst labouring in the Leeds circuit, he went at regular intervals, in the course of his duty, to the house of Mr. Stoner, of Barwick-in-Elmet, where he slept. "On one occasion he had spent nearly the whole of the day in fasting and prayer; and the following morning rose early, and for several hours was engaged in prayer. Mrs. Stoner had gone out for a little while, and left in the house a pious woman, who was occasionally employed by her. After some time, Mr. Bramwell opened the parlour door, called S—— into the room, said nothing to her, but fell upon his knees. She also knelt down. They both remained for some time *in profound silence*, during which period, she felt the Divine influence in such an extraordinary manner, that it seemed to her as if the room was completely filled with the glory of God. For some moments, nature was nearly overcome, and she was ready to sink under the visions of God! Mr. Bramwell, then prayed, and gave thanks to the Lord for such a glorious manifestation. He related the circumstances to Mrs. Stoner, on her return, as well as to several other Christian friends. And for many years afterwards, when he happened to see Mr. or Mrs. Stoner, he said, 'Does the glory still remain in your parlour?'"

It is, perhaps, scarcely to be wondered at, that a man should become a favorite with heaven who was always holding communion with it. With the practical bent which his religion exhibited so decidedly, he was endeavouring to realize, as far as possible, the scriptural injunction to "pray without ceasing." 'I want to pray continually,' he would say. 'I

feel I can never pray too much. This short life must be prayer.' By prayer alone could spiritual existence be supported, and the adversary constantly repelled. "Satan," said he, in a sermon to which Mrs. Tatham of Nottingham adverts, "may attack, and use all his artillery against a true Christian, but he cannot overcome him so long as he keeps his armour bright and in constant exercise by never-ceasing prayer."* 'The devil,' said he again, in a conversation which occurred on the last Sunday he spent in this world, 'hates prayer; and if, by any means, he can prevail with us either to neglect this duty, or to be less fervent in it, he gains his purpose. Sometimes business will call off our attention, and we neglect it once in the day: at night we reflect on our folly and lament our loss, resolving, if spared, to be more diligent on the morrow. Sometimes we attend to the hours which we have set apart for the performance of this duty; but our hearts are not there; they are wandering to the ends of the earth. At other times we are conscious of having done some evil, which causes us to be ashamed of appearing at the footstool of our heavenly father. Thus, by one means or other, Satan obtains his desire, and afterwards reproves us for it. But when we live in a habit of constant, fervent prayer, our grand enemy flies, and our souls prosper.' Satan, however, had very little chance here, if prayer was a perfect panoply. It was the preacher's first duty in the morning, and his last at night. As much of the day besides as could be properly spared, was also devoted to it. It might be said that he prayed in season and out of season; in the pulpit, and at the tea-table; at the hour of public worship, and in the middle of the night; when his cries soothed the anguish of the penitent, and when they roused his neighbours from their morning slumbers, and drove sleep from their pillows. Whilst an apprentice, we have seen that he would avail himself of any place or position for the practice of this duty; at one time with bare knees on the floor of his master's kitchen—at another, in a sand-pit—and again, hidden amongst the boughs of a favorite tree near Preston. In later years, too, he would make use of any pleasant retreat for this purpose. At Herd Farm, near Harewood, which he visited periodically whilst in the Leeds circuit, he found one to his taste. The house was partly encircled by a beautiful wood, into which he was accustomed to retire, in order to converse with his Maker. There he remained for a considerable time, frequently for three or four hours together.

* Dr. Beaumont's Memoirs of Mrs. Tatham, p. 112.

Some member of the hospitable family (Mr. Leak's) was perhaps despatched to bring him in to partake of their meal, if his absence were unduly prolonged. The preacher was soon found; his voice was the clue, for his loud and impassioned tones, repeated by the numerous echoes of the place, as if the nymphs and dryads of its streams and groves were Christian converts, chanting their responses to his litany, soon led the seeker to the spot where the man of God was kneeling in devout prayer, or pacing about in audible meditation. When stationed in the Hull circuit, he found the street in which he lived too bustling, and therefore requested permission of his friend, Mr. Hebblewhite, to occupy a room in the house of the latter whenever he wished for a little retirement. To this room he frequently resorted, and sometimes remained from nine o'clock in the morning, till four or five in the afternoon, absorbed in prayer and contemplation. "From his refusing to take any refreshment," says Mr. Hebblewhite, "it was evident that these were days especially set apart for fasting and intercession."

It would have been interesting, if practicable, to calculate how much of his life was spent on his knees, or in the act, if not in the attitude, of prayer. "Perhaps," observes Mr. Dawson, in the funeral sermon, "it will not be asserting too much, if it be said that upon an average he employed six hours out of the twenty-four in prayer and other exercises of the closet." This is nothing like an exaggeration; on the contrary, it is probably much within the real truth, though it still embraces only a part of his devotional duties. There were, in addition, the supplications of the pulpit, in the prayer-meetings, in his pastoral visits; and "besides this," continues Mr. Dawson, "through the whole of the day he was darting the feelings of his heart to God by perpetual ejaculations, and when in company with his friends, he was continually leading them into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and offering the sacrifices of prayer and praise." Here, then, was an amount of devotion, which no pretender to sanctity could well have realized. It exhibits a degree of pious energy which recalls the feats of some of the puritan or covenanting divines. Take the case of a staunch old covenanter, Mr. Welch, of Ayr, the son-in-law of John Knox. Out of every twenty-four hours, eight were consumed in private prayer. Like his Wesleyan brother, he would wake in the middle of the night, throw a plaid around him, and renew his supplications without regard to the lapse of time. Like him too, he was accustomed to kneel upon the cold floor, and to this imprudent habit, the covenanter's

death was attributed. Occasionally, to give more solemnity to his devotions, he proceeded to a church in the neighbourhood, and there spent the night in communion with heaven. Only think of that solitary man, wrapped in the gloom of midnight, and surrounded by all the sombre adjuncts of such a locality, which superstition, and perhaps some natural instinctive sentiment, have rendered so repulsive, yet pursuing his pious exercises, until the soul at last was bathed with the radiance of heaven, and the place became a little Bethel, to which angels descended, in order to commune with the wakeful, praying mortal! The Wesleyan minister, it is true, did not repair to so melancholy a site for the purpose of intercession, but he would occasionally devote the night to the same work in his own chamber, or elsewhere. 'What is so beneficial, indeed,' he asks, 'as a *whole night* spent in prayer?'

A whole night, however, would not suffice when he had any particular work in hand. If he set his heart upon any great blessing, particularly a public one, a stream of supplication was kept up with as little interruption as possible for weeks together. This was the case when he strove to bring about a revival in the Dewsbury circuit. Writing from Sheffield (1796), he tells a correspondent that he is 'much engaged in prayer, and should be so for three weeks to come.'—In Hull, he speaks of 'three weeks of agony,' at the end of which he began to 'see the Lord work.' On his entering the Birstal circuit, he told the people that he knew a man—doubtless himself—'who, on bended knees, prayed for Birstal thirteen times a day; sometimes for hours together.'—Nor must we forget, that in his earlier history, he spent on one particular occasion no less than six and thirty hours *together* in prayer (it is said), 'that he might ascertain the will of the Lord concerning him.*' Yet his craving was insatiable; all this

* Mr. Bramwell generally carried about with him an external evidence of his devotion to prayer in the threadbare cloth on his knees. The same test he thought might be applied to others, and in one case the state of the trousers was profitably adduced as a mild hint respecting the state of the soul:—"Some years ago, when travelling in the mail coach from, there was a gentleman inside with him. Mr. Bramwell wished to introduce spiritual conversation; but, finding the gentleman an entire stranger to subjects of a spiritual nature, and without any relish for things heavenly and divine, he suddenly put his hand upon the gentleman's knees, and said, 'Sir, I think this is a piece of new cloth.'—"They are not new but old breeches," replied the gentleman;—"what made you think they were new ones?"—"Why," said Mr. Bramwell, 'because they are not worn any at the knees!' The gentleman looked at Mr. Bramwell's, and perceiving that they were quite threadbare, asked him the reason. Mr. Bramwell told him that it was occasioned by constant prayer. The mind of the gentleman was instantly seized with powerful convictions; he owned that it was very proper to make grateful acknowledgments to the Author of our being—a sentiment which Mr. Bramwell improved by a few appropriate and striking remarks. He began to pray, and the Lord soon made him the happy partaker of the joys of his salvation. He is now, I believe, a distinguished ornament in the Church of Christ."

was not enough; he would pray more and more if possible! 'I am contriving,' he says in a letter, 'to find out a way of praying more than ever: I think it possible. A day spent in continual prayer, brings the soul into nearer union. And if every day be thus spent, as far as possible, what an increase of union will there be in a short time!' And then, too, mighty as he was in this exercise, he was always anxious to enlist the supplications of others, either for him or with him. In his letters, he constantly solicits the prayers of his correspondents, or stimulates them to the performance of this duty for themselves. To his children he would write, 'pray, pray for your father.' To his friend, Mr. Drake, he makes an offer to meet him every day at the throne of grace—spite of geographical distances—at a given hour. On another occasion, he requested the same individual to join him every day at two o'clock, without fail, to pray for four things which he enumerates. Again, he writes to his daughter thus:—'A number of us have agreed to retire a few minutes three times in the forenoon, and three times in the afternoon. I want you to join.'—And at particular seasons, when he wished for support in his applications to the throne, he would send for a 'wrestling' friend or two, in order that this 'gathering together' might ensure the presence of Jehovah in their midst, and secure them a larger blessing than common.

These traits require consideration, because they are rich in meaning, and best illustrate the character of the man. They prove that here was no hypocrisy, but a genuine practical belief. The spurious Christian does not *shut to* the door of his closet, and pray in secret by day or by night. No person—strange fact it is—thinks of 'exhibiting' before his Maker, although most anxious, perhaps, to gain the good opinion of a pauper by religious pretences. They prove also that Mr. Bramwell's soul had soon and completely conquered that gravitating propensity to earth, which, in most other mortals, is so feebly counteracted by the attraction of the great Magnet above. Like Mahomet's coffin (as fabled), it seemed to be suspended in mid-air. Or, we may say, it was like some purified and ethereal thing which strove to force its way upwards from the dense contaminated atmosphere of earth; yet still remained attached to the soil by a ligature which death alone could sever. That tie was kept in general at its full tension: the soul, it is true, was often compelled to descend to the grosser strata; but the moment it was released, away it soared to the highest region it could reach; and when at last the string was severed, the glad spirit bounded aloft until

it found a resting-place in the purest regions of spiritual existence.—There were moments, too, when he felt as if he were undergoing absorption into the Divine Being—‘just going into God,’ as he expresses it. This state, however, was not a mere Alexandrian ecstasy, or a Pietist rapture, but an overwhelming conviction of the Divine presence and experience of the Divine power—so much so, that on one occasion he informed a friend, that ‘for nearly two hours he did not know whether he was in the body or not.’ Indeed, if we might appropriate a somewhat curious expression of a celebrated German writer, Novalis, —applied, however, to Benedict Spinoza in a very different sense—we should say that William Bramwell was divinely intoxicated (*ein Gott-trunkener Mensch* :)* —that is, filled, excited, overpowered, almost confounded with the idea of God!

* “DER SPINOZISMUS IST EINE UEBERSÄTTIGUNG MIT GOTTHEIT.” [Spinozism is an over-filling with Deity.] In a very different sense we say, because with Benedict it was the *intellect* that staggered under the mighty presence—with William Bramwell it was the *heart*: the former saw God *substantially* revealed—concreted, it might be said, if the word were not perhaps too adventurous—in every object around him; the latter felt him to be *spiritually* disclosed in every place, and operating in every event. Some may perhaps think the one view almost as objectionable as the other—at least in its minute and apparently trivial applications. But verily when a man has drunk deeply of the Divine Idea, and his soul has been saturated with that magnificent element—the true nectar of Paradise—his poor human brain is apt to reel under its potent influence. Thus it was that William Bramwell was often ready “to sink under the visions of God.” The Almighty perhaps metes out his glory to mortals according to their capacity in the scale of spiritualism—say rather, he dilutes it with the element of humanity, that it may not overpower their finite faculties. Were it otherwise, we were all dead men! One glance at unclouded Deity would be destruction. When the Redeemer was sent to this earth, Divinity sank—and sank—and sank until it reached the level of plain mortality, and there it settled outwardly in the form of simple flesh—clay without, but God within! It was necessary to mix up Divinity with dust, that it might walk and live amongst men! And yet if the fleshly envelope could for a moment have become transparent—if a ray of the true God could have darted through in full splendour, as it partially did on the mount of transfiguration, would not the brain have been burnt up, and the spectator have perished under the sight? So if the curtain which conceals Jehovah from human gaze were withdrawn for an instant, or if there were but a slight rent made in the pavilion in which he dwells, the efflux of glory would prove overwhelming. Yet some mortals see more of this glory than others. To them the veil appears to be thinner or more porous. They obtain a fuller glimpse of the sun of the universe, and are dazzled for ever! Then—turn to what object they will—they see the spectral image of that sun impressed upon it: everything is stamped and coloured with the thought of Deity!





CHAPTER VIII.

CHARACTER CONTINUED—War with Satan—Onward—Plain Counsel—Discernment of Spirits—Anecdotes—Telescopic Glimpses of Eternity—Benevolence and Illustrations—Cheerfulness—Asceticism—Character in Conference—Minutes—Results of his Existence—Greatness and Goodness—Concluding Observations.

Thy works, and alms, and all thy good endeavour,
Staid not behind, nor in the grave were trod :
But, as faith pointed with her golden rod,
Follow'd thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and faith, who knew them best
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge; who thenceforth bid thee rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

MILTON.



ET—to reverse the subject—we must look at his struggles as well as his triumphs; we must remember his conflicts with the enemy, as well as his successful communings with the Almighty. Christian valour is often most required where it is least observed—in mere resistance.

“What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.”

If William Bramwell's warfare with the Prince of Darkness alone could have been fully chronicled, the story would have been strange and eventful. His strong apprehension of spiritual things, aided, perhaps, by a vivid imagination, gave an appearance of reality to conceptions which are generally somewhat too abstract and intangible. To speak technically, his ghostly enemies seemed to have an *objective* existence. Like Bunyan, he could have readily fancied that the tempter was always haranguing his soul, and endeavouring to mislead it by his subtle oratory. Like Luther, he almost gave shape and visibility to the dread adversary, as when the Protestant hero imagined that the Evil One rose up before him in his apartment at Wartburg, and the inkstand was forthwith launched

at the head of the intruder in mortal defiance. He had to do battle with this foe continually. 'Satan,' says he, 'strives every day; my life is, more than ever, a regular fight.' It was not a series of skirmishes merely; but of desperate engagements, in which the stout-hearted warrior knew that his all was involved. There must be no defeat there. Cost what it would, he *must* succeed! And how? By means of his Divine champion! With trembling exultation he recognised the helping hand of his God in those struggles. It was He who smote the assailant, and delivered the oppressed. 'Happy is it for me that God is Almighty, or I should be ruined. Satan has tried every means to accomplish this; but the Lord has stood by me.' Instead of being ruined, however, he went on by Divine grace, conquering and to conquer. The result was such as must always ensue, when this kind of warfare is victoriously pursued. A mortal invariably exalts himself by his triumphs over this clever and powerful, but corrupted immortal. Fighting with Satan is instructive—ennobling. There is heroism required of the highest order. With a man you know what to expect; you measure yourself against an intellect which fundamentally resembles your own: you look for the same feints, stratagemis, aims, resources, and appliances which you yourself may employ. But with a great spiritual adversary—a seraph reversed—the crowned sovereign of hell—the experienced warrior of ages—the victor in millions of fights—master of all strategy—consummate in diabolical generalship—with *him*, a war 'to the knife' deliberately undertaken, unweariedly prosecuted, must necessarily call forth all the valour and lofty attributes which the Almighty may have bestowed. Trained in such a school, and trained to conquest over such a foe, no wonder that the veterans of the cross have bid defiance to every meaner antagonist, and learnt that all the evils which may befall them in this world, may be overcome by faith and perseverance!

Indeed, this same military spirit—if we may so phrase it—was as evident in Mr. Bramwell's ministerial labours, as in his own personal experience. He perceived clearly that religion was a warfare—life a campaign—and death a crowning victory, or an irreparable defeat. He saw that there was a desperate struggle between light and darkness—God and Satan—for every soul. To assist in rescuing mortals was his great work. He flung himself upon the great adversary. Instead of talking *of* him, we may say, he struck *at* him. Somehow or other, his very words were what Richter calls Luther's—'half-battles.' Such, at least, was their effect, that they did the

business of blows. They brought on a general engagement, where previously the hostile forces had kept up a little skirmishing merely. Hence in a single hour, under his exhortations, the elements of good and evil had joined battle, and fought out the question which might have continued in suspense for years before. Perhaps this is the highest merit which a preacher can possess—that he brings his hearers to the point, and the dispute to a decision.

Nor when this decision was made, was the warfare finished. Not only Satan himself, but everything belonging to Satan, must be ejected from the soul. If he gave sinners no rest whilst his voice could reach them, as little could he sanction the repose of professors. Hence he preached to such the doctrine of perpetual progress and entire sanctification with unwearied zeal. The possibilities of a lapse were constantly urged. However high believers might rise, they were always in danger of a fall; it might be by a smooth graduated descent from a pinnacle to the plain,—gliding along like the glacier, with sure but imperceptible movements; or else like the avalanche, abruptly precipitated from some mountain's brow, and dashing downwards with frightful velocity, to bury itself in the deepest abyss. These blunt but energetic appeals were intended to keep professors on the alert. Some, of course, were offended—they needed the advice; but others found that such admonitions produced a salutary agitation, which kept their zeal from decay. In no part of his pastoral duty, perhaps, did he exhibit more fidelity than in the administration of rebuke, wherever it was necessary. The same fearless spirit which he had displayed in youth, when he ran about Preston reproving sinners, was manifested to the end. "His brethren," said Mr. Nelson, "thought him often to blame in this particular, but he continued to the close of life to pursue the same line of conduct." If there was a professor whose conduct was not accordant with his profession, he would earnestly, yet affectionately, exhibit the discrepancy. If there was a wealthy member in danger of attaching too much value to his wealth, how faithfully would he warn him that the rich must be saved in spite of, and not by means of, their riches! If a young disciple was about to marry an unconverted individual, even in so delicate a matter he would venture to interpose, and to point out the peril of an unsanctified alliance. All this was done mildly—respectfully—but still firmly. The manner was kind, if the counsel were unpalatable. "It is not an easy matter," Dr. Taft observes, in his character of Mr. Bramwell, "for a Christian minister to be able to say with

truth, 'I am clear from the blood of all men,' but to attain to such a desirable eminence, ought to be a most important part of a minister's study. If there has been one person since the days of St. Paul who might utter this expression with safety, Mr. Bramwell was the man. For he was faithful both in the pulpit and in private, to the rich and to the poor, to the professor and to the profane, to his friends and to his enemies, to preachers and to people. If it would not involve character, I could mention instances in abundance to prove the truth of these remarks."

On the other hand, it is to be observed that he was often instrumental in producing a reconciliation between estranged relatives, and counselling marriages which proved extremely happy. On these matters he was freely consulted, both in person and by letter. Some of his friends gave him credit for peculiar sagacity on such subjects, and gladly availed themselves of his advice, even where advice is seldom sought or desired. It was the same also in matters of business; we know a highly respectable individual, who declares, that had it not been for the minister's precautionary suggestions in a worldly transaction, he would have been ruined.

A still higher faculty, it has been seen, was sometimes attributed to Mr. Bramwell;—one which "nearly resembled the discerning of spirits." Many illustrations have already been given. One more:—the Rev. J. Stones, the relator, was one night preaching at Birstal, when a stranger who was present, was taken ill, and removed from the chapel. On inquiry, this person stated that he had come from Lancashire in search of work, and had been without food for some days. A subscription was set on foot for his benefit, and some money collected. Mr. Bramwell was then in the circuit; but on his return the case was mentioned to him, and he went immediately to visit the unfortunate stranger. The latter repeated the story of his woes, with great pathos and simplicity. "It went, said Mr. Stones, "to the bottom of my heart." Mr. Bramwell "frequently groaned in spirit; but at length he lifted up his head, looked at the man with an eye that seemed to pierce him through, and said, 'Tell me, is there not a *bastard child* in all this?' The man appeared to be thunderstruck; he began to tremble, faltered in his speech, and at length confessed that he had left home to avoid the payment for an illegitimate child which the law required." The detected impostor was compelled to decamp without his booty, which he was only waiting to receive.

Now here Mr. Bramwell declared that to the best of his

recollection, he had never seen the man before; he had heard nothing to his discredit: apparently, there was no reason to suspect a representation of distress which had imposed upon so many others; or if the superior sagacity of the minister had discovered some ground for distrust, there could be nothing to guide him to the conclusion, that an illegitimate child was the remote cause of the impostor's proceedings. How, then, can the circumstance be explained? Some may say, that it is merely a clever instance of the art of guessing. This is not impossible. A random conjecture may have proved correct,—just as an archer shutting his eyes, and drawing the bow at a venture, without knowing whether the target is placed before or behind, to the right hand or to the left, may actually lodge his arrow in the centre. Let him try *again*, however, under the same conditions of uncertainty. Would he succeed? Not very likely! Take another case,* already detailed—the case in which Mr. Bramwell declared that a certain individual, of whom he had no personal knowledge, was a thorough infidel. As an insulated incident, the theory of guessing might afford a passable explanation, but as an additional instance, such a solution becomes extremely improbable. Still it is possible, that on both occasions, a lucky conjecture may have sufficed:—the bandaged archer may have hit the mark by *accident* on both trials. Suppose, then, that these were the only instances which occurred in his career; the reader might, perhaps, under that view, pass them over as ‘extraordinary coincidences,’ or ‘fortunate guesses,’ without taxing his credulity by suspecting that any higher attribute was concerned. But if there were many such—if they happened in almost every circuit in which Mr. Bramwell officiated—if they were attested by several respectable witnesses, then, whatever conclusion we may adopt, the theory of ‘guessing’ must, at any rate, be dismissed. If it were necessary to add any argument upon this point to the one naturally implied in the *number* of illustrations, it might be found in the obvious fact, that no honest man has a right to pass himself off as a spiritual conjuror, and that no pious minister would ever deliberately make the attempt. There can be no doubt that Mr. Bramwell possessed a remarkable degree of penetration, and could dive into character more deeply than most men. The Rev. James Everett—no superficial observer—states, that he never met with a man in the Wesleyan connexion “who had such a deep and accurate

* Vide page 46.

knowledge of human nature, and the operations of the Spirit of God. In these he was wise above his fellows."

It might be easy to give some cases which could undoubtedly be explained as random hits, but these were of a sportive character, and never involved anything serious; they differ from the other class as widely as the polished little shafts which fly about in a happy private circle, do from the weapons wielded in good earnest in the sterner intercourse of mankind. The following trivial incident is an example. A lady, who had been accustomed to the gaieties of fashionable life, became a convert under Mr. Bramwell's ministry. He watched over her with great solicitude, in order to prevent any relapse into worldliness of disposition; and she, on her part, repaid this attention with all the affection of a spiritual daughter. One day, however, she had been drawn into a scene of amusement, which, in his view, might possibly savour of the old leaven of dissipation. "And so," said he to her, with a playful smile, when they next met, "you joined in the dance?"—"Oh, no, I did no such thing," was the reply. "But then," he rejoined, assuming an air of mock severity, "you looked *through the window* at them!" The charge was correct: the lady laughingly acknowledged that she could not resist the temptation of taking a peep through the window at those who were engaged in her old, but now abandoned pastime.

It was very different, however, when dealing with a solemn subject, and a solemn transaction;—most of all, when that subject was the soul, and the transaction, its salvation. Take an instance:—Mr. Bramwell was once invited to the house of Mr. Coulson, of Hazlewood, near York, to meet a friend. He had not been long there before he inquired for Mrs. Coulson; he was told that she would soon be with them. At length she arrived, and, on entering the apartment, Mr. Bramwell said to her, 'Mrs. Coulson, salvation is come to your house—*you are this day to be saved.*' Now this lady (according to the narrator) "had not previously felt any strong religious impressions, and appeared then to be under no particular concern for the salvation of her soul. Mr. Bramwell and the rest knelt down, and united in fervent prayer to God for her. After some time Mr. Bramwell asked her, if she felt her need of salvation; she answered, 'No.' They continued to wrestle with God in her behalf for some time longer; at length she became deeply affected, and feeling herself to be a sinner, she earnestly joined with them in supplication to God, who was graciously pleased to pardon her sins, and make her happy in

his love, before they arose from their knees. She ever after walked in the light of God's countenance, and left the world in the full triumph of faith." Other instances, also, of what may be called occult impressions, have been related in the course of this narrative. The frequent references which he made to his own death, both as to the time—"before next Conference;" the suddenness—"I am persuaded I shall go in a moment;" the manner—"I expect to go in the same way" (apoplexy)—indicate the singular force and accuracy which belonged to some, at least, of his presentiments.

Whatever conclusion, then, may be drawn respecting these curious incidents, we cannot forbear repeating that one circumstance should be carefully borne in mind, in case any reader should judge it necessary to treat them as matters involving some real phenomena; namely, that Mr. Bramwell was a man who lived in continual converse with Deity—that he was truly of a compound, two-worlded nature (if the phrase may be allowed), and dwelt as much in the atmosphere of heaven, as he did in the grosser element of earth—that his intense devotion communicated a rare degree of spirituality to his existence—and that in those exercises which no Christian can hesitate to recognise as the means whereby marvels have been wrought (prayer, &c.), he was eminently honoured of God. Reflecting on this, we can safely believe more of such an individual than of others far less remarkable in their religious history. Can a mortal walk with God, and yet learn nothing more than ordinary sons of clay? Can he frequent the Mount from day to day, and yet bring down no portion of the glory? Is it not true that those who live in perpetual communion with the Holy One, receive a fuller inspiration than others, less devoted, enjoy? Are they not favoured with a higher illumination, enabling them to see further, and to judge more accurately than other men? So Jeremy Taylor affirms:—"There is a sort of God's dear servants who walk in perfectness, who 'perfect holiness in the fear of God;' and they have a degree of clarity and Divine knowledge more than we can discourse of, and more certain than the demonstrations of geometry, brighter than the sun, and indeficient as the light of heaven. But this is to be felt, and not to be talked of—and they that never touched it with their finger, may secretly perhaps laugh at it in their hearts, and be never the wiser.—These are the friends of God, and they best know God's mind; and they only that are so, know how much such persons do know. They have a special 'unction from above;' so that now you are come to the top of all; this is the

highest round of the ladder, and angels stand upon it: they dwell in love and contemplation.”* Such a degree of ‘clarity’ was *once* vouchsafed to many of ‘God’s dear servants,’ as was evidenced in the ‘discernment of spirits,’† which an Italian commentator happily designates “a supernatural and divine light, by which the possessor judged of persons, whether in their deeds, doctrine, or movements, they were actuated by the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Evil.”‡ If, then, there *may be* such a power bestowed or attained in these *later* days, it may be safely said that no man was more likely to enjoy it than William Bramwell, and that no hypothesis could better explain the singular incidents detailed than that of real ‘discernment.’

Nor must it be forgotten that the simple, unsophisticated character of the minister is of itself a guarantee against every thing like pretension or charlatany. Whatever might be his defects, he possessed the grand—should it not be said, the greatest—merit of being sincere and genuine in word and deed. His moral instinct would have revolted at the perpetration of falsehood in any of those forms where it is daily practised by many very respectable individuals, under the impression that it has no affinity whatever with the black art of lying. And yet are not guile—pretension—imposition—delusion—specious appearances—affectation, and other acts by which a man assumes to be what he is not, downright lies, and therefore downright crimes?

But whatever may be thought of Mr. Bramwell’s powers as a spiritual *clairvoyant*, we must give him credit for another kind of insight, which is by no means so common as might be expected. He looked into the great *realities* of existence; he perceived the dwarfish character of human things; he saw that here there was little else but shadow and vapour, and that the greatest fact of all was one which men practically consider as the least—our relation to the future. What is our position? We are here—but earth is only a speck in the universe; in time—but that is only an instant; in a peculiar state—but this is to decide our condition for eternity. All is transitory, provisional, probationary. Life is a preface—to what? We are hurrying onward—whither? Our predecessors—have they not passed away for ever? Ourselves—what is to become of us? One generation after another makes its appearance on the broad

* Jeremy Taylor’s Sermon to the University of Dublin.

† 1 Cor. xii, 10.

‡ “Un lume soprannaturale e divino per loquale si giudicava delle persone, se ne’ lor fatti, dottrina, o movimenti, erano mossi dallo Spirito di Dio, o dal maligno.”—Quoted by Mr. WAWN.

highway of existence ; marches on with rapid step, filling the air with its tumultuous shouts, and then vanishes in the Cimmerian darkness of the west. What has become of it? Not one individual of that host could cease to be ! Its myriads are somewhere—doing something ! Have their bodies perished, and that which was substance (according to earth) mouldered into its primitive dust ? Yet their souls—those strange indestructible essences—are living, thinking, feeling, suffering, or rejoicing at this moment ! So will they be millions of ages hence—living, thinking, feeling, suffering, or rejoicing still ! It was here then that the insight of William Bramwell stood him in such stead. He looked at man, and found within him an immortal spirit ; at time, and saw that it was but a fragment of eternity ; at earth, and discovered that it was an antechamber to heaven or hell. Here the vision of his soul was truly telescopic. Just as the astronomer's noblest instrument unfolds a magnificent field of stars, worlds, and systems, where the untutored eye detected nothing more than a spangled canopy for a single globe, so this long-sighted faculty gauged the depths of being as far as they were accessible to mortal ken, and descried those dread realities of which so few ever catch a proper glimpse, until they burst upon the view of the disembodied soul. Instead of a petty planet, with its thousands of earthworms grasping at baubles, and struggling for its perishable trumpery, he discerned a nursery of immortal beings in training for one of two states : around us there rolled the vast ocean of eternity ; in the distance lay the mysterious land of spirits ; thither thousands were hastening, without chart or pilot, or provision for the voyage. Deeper still he looked, and his vision seemed to penetrate the mist which hovered over that shadowy land. There he saw a judgment-seat, and one terrible of aspect who sat thereon ; culprits dragged to the bar, the roll of crime unfolded, the look of unutterable despair as the awful sentence was pronounced, and the unavailing struggle of the victim as the tormentors bore him away to undying misery ! And yonder, too, his mental vision travelled up to the very doors of Paradise, and placed before him the gorgeous spectacle on which the rapt seer of Patmos gazed with such bewildered eyes—the Ancient of days, the Lamb but newly slain, and the worshipping hosts that encompass the burning throne of the Great King !—And on such sights as these his eye continually dwelt. Indeed, once fairly seen, all else will appear dull and intolerably tame. Could this earth present aught to fascinate the gaze of a man who had accustomed himself to such exciting exhibitions ?

Earth! says he—‘what *is* earth? All nothing, when compared with Him! *One proper view of glory eclipses the whole!*’

Perhaps it is not too much to say that his soul in some measure reflected the light which gleamed upon it from these far-off realities. It might be this which gave such a nameless charm to his character and ministry. His thoughts and words were not strictly of the earth—earthly: they were drawn from the depths of being. He spoke *de profundis*. His voice was as a voice from another world. His dialect was a kind of spiritual *lingua franca*—a compound of the terrestrial and celestial tongues—the speech of angels, broken and imperfect. The loftiness and purity of his nature compelled him, in a measure, to associate more with heavenly things and heavenly thoughts than with earthly. Like the man who dwells on the confines of two great kingdoms, the national characteristics of both were in some degree blended and combined in the same individual; but in this instance, the spiritual element had by far the predominant sway, and imbued his whole being with its superior virtue.

Mr. Bramwell’s indifference to mere worldly comfort or enjoyment, made it an easy thing for him to practise—what is often termed such by mere courtesy—benevolence. Although his means were ever limited, something was regularly abstracted from his scanty income for the relief of the necessitous. Money, provisions, and wearing apparel were dispensed with a liberality, which, in his circumstances, savoured of indiscretion. He has often bestowed the last penny he had in hand upon some distressed individual. It was seldom he was master of two coats at a time; the first deserving applicant was sure to become the owner of one. Whilst in the Salford circuit, a friend one morning told him of a local preacher who was in great poverty. On returning home in the evening, this friend found a note from Mr. Bramwell, requesting that he would forward a coat which accompanied the letter to the poor brother, without mentioning the matter to any one. The garment proved to be the very same which the donor had been wearing at the time.

There were, of course, many cases brought under his notice, in which he could furnish no appropriate relief. In one instance, he was fortunate in affording considerable consolation to a pious widow, who consulted him on her embarrassed state of affairs, in a way which he perhaps little expected. At his request, she handed him a short statement of her debts and resources, exhibiting, alas! a most melancholy deficiency.

The minister glanced at the contents of the paper, and saw at once that it was a case for which he could find no remedy, except by application to Heaven. Hastily scribbling some Hebrew characters upon the back of the paper, he folded it up, and returned it to her without a word. She took it, and probably thinking that the document was a precious memento of some spiritual interference to be exerted on her behalf, carried it about with her for several years as an Eastern would an amulet. The minister had doubtless consecrated the ceremony by silent prayer, and calculated to some extent upon the efficacy of his future supplications. The consequence was, that the anxiety of the poor widow was relieved by this interview, and the calamity she had anticipated was in fact averted. The scrap of paper now lies before us; but the Hebrew characters are scarcely intelligible. Long after the incident had occurred, she continued to regard it with peculiar veneration.

His charity sometimes displayed itself in a rather curious form; he would give, to save others who might be crippled in their circumstances, the necessity of being benevolent. One year, says Dr. Taft, "when the circuit debt at Salford was £200, Mr. Bramwell was very solicitous that ten persons might be found, if possible, to contribute £20 each, and he would most gladly have been one of the ten, that an additional and a very oppressive collection might not be made upon our people in general. Had his offer been accepted, in that case, he must have given his all."

This unrestrained benevolence soon dissipated his private property, and largely encroached upon his professional stipend. Everything that he had to give, he gave without scruple. He would have hailed with pleasure any scheme for making 'all things common' again amongst the disciples of Christ. He would often deny himself what are deemed indispensable comforts. Thus, in Salford, he refused to have a fire in his 'study,' because the society was then poor and overburthened. He frequently enjoined the strictest frugality upon Mrs. Bramwell, although her management was so economical, that none but a man determined to reduce his household expenditure to the very narrowest limits, would have thought a caution of the kind necessary. 'Ellen,' he would say, 'remember that these things are paid for by the pence of the poor, as well as by the pounds of the rich.*' Yet at the same time,

* There were persons, however, who could murmur at the extravagant living of preachers, and when this was done one 'quarter-day' in Mr. Bramwell's hearing, he indignantly exclaimed, "I have but one suit of clothes in the world, but if that is too much, I am willing

and with no little inconsistency, he could press his hospitalities upon friends in a spirit so liberal, that it was impossible for Mrs. Bramwell to furnish them with an adequate entertainment. Nay, his charity even made free with her property as well as his own. Mr. Longden states that he has known him not only give away the single top-coat in his possession during severe weather, but also the "garments of his beloved wife, for the relief of persons in great distress." Indeed, he has more than once invaded Mrs. Bramwell's wardrobe in her absence, and levied charitable contributions—somewhat uncharitably as regards her—from her own habiliments. The property left him by his father, and which he had voluntarily set apart as a fund for the education and advancement of his children, suffered in a similar manner, from the encroachments which were made upon it from time to time. Mr. Longden further observes, that on one occasion, "while visiting a sick man, who was in extreme want, and lay in bed without a shirt, Mr. Bramwell retired into another room, took off his own, and gave it to the poor man." Another individual remarks, that Mr. Bramwell "would never consent to have more than one suit of clothes, and one pair of shoes in wearing at the same time. And as soon as his dress began to have a worn appearance, he gave it to those who were in need, and procured a new one." Thus voluntarily impoverished, he could, however, make the sacrifice of worldly comforts and commodities with more cheerfulness than most men; what he gave or renounced, he lent unto the Lord—the safest debtor in the universe—the Being who debits himself with every cup of cold water furnished to a disciple in his name, and faithfully repays every service with the magnificent rewards of heaven. The minister had no reason to care much for the goods and chattels of this planet. He was laying up treasure in another sphere. He was rapidly accumulating a fortune there, and knew that he should soon retire to enjoy a splendid hoard which eternity itself could not exhaust. Poor now—he would be wealthy then! Paupers sometimes change into princes, and princes into paupers, during the short interval of passage from this world into the next!

Dr. Taft, in the character which he has drawn of Mr. Bramwell, observes that many persons who were but slightly acquainted with him, "thought he was of a gloomy and censorious spirit; but when they knew him better, they were

to preach in my shirt-sleeves!" What would such parsimonious objectors have said to the remark of a gentleman of rank to a parent whose son had just entered the Wesleyan ministry—"Why, sir, he will never get *more* than £200 a year!"

agreeably surprised with his cheerful and kind disposition. Always happy in his own soul, he delighted in the happiness of all around him. This was most evident, however, when he was in the company of his intimate friends, because he was then the most free from reserve. When in large parties, there was sometimes the appearance of restraint or reserve about him, unless the conversation was very profitable; but if on these occasions his words were few, they were 'seasoned with grace,' and calculated to enliven and animate; and not to depress and discourage those around him. In him, cheerfulness had its origin in a consciousness of the Divine favour; and it was chastened with a heavenly solemnity, from a sense of the Divine presence. He was, therefore, as much opposed to levity as he was to melancholy."

That there was little gloom about him, may be readily admitted by all who subscribe to Cowper's test—

"He is the happy man whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come."

And that there was little censoriousness in his nature, is fully proved by the abhorrence which he ever manifested for evil speaking. Yet the erroneous impressions entertained respecting him, were so strong in some instances, that persons have not only declined an introduction, but actually dreaded one. The thought of an interview with this holy man has actually produced a feeling of alarm. But how different the sentiment he inspired when his acquaintance was really made, and his true character discovered! It is needless to say that those who had most distrusted him at a distance, became his warmest admirers and steadiest friends. Even in his intercourse with children, who are no mean judges of temper, and are instinctively repelled by any harshness of conduct, he could render himself a favorite, and by his engaging manner and gentle attentions easily secure their regard.*

There might perhaps be more reason for charging him with a little unnecessary asceticism. Without, it may be, imputing any direct merit to self-mortification, he practised it in various ways. His frequent fasts were perhaps somewhat superfluous—at least, in the modern regimen of Christianity. His spare diet might conduce to physical health, but probably it

* Mr. Bramwell was once requested to undertake the correction of a little urchin who had attained a complete mastery over his parents. He complied, and knowing well that the latter had been too economical in the use of the rod, and that the proper remedy for the evil was a sound chastisement, he subjected the refractory patient to an operation accordingly. The office was at best unpleasant; but the effect upon the parents was curious:—they never *forgave* him for his services!

did little for the soul. The topic is, however, one of a very unsatisfactory nature; the science of corporeal chastisement by way, or under pretence, of spiritual correction, has been pursued with too much formality to suggest any very favorable opinion of its merits. It is possible to flog or famish the body to death, without penetrating to the soul within, or affecting it in any sensible degree. If it be a real infliction, there may be more impropriety than merit in the fact of its self-imposition. It is very doubtful whether a Christian has a right to *make* crosses for himself at all. In general, there is no lack of suffering in this world, and therefore the man who is dissatisfied with his quota of the universal burden, impugns by implication the wisdom of those providential arrangements which attest the skill of the Creator as much in the distribution of sorrow, as in the dispensation of happiness. Physicians tell us that the laws of disease are as beautiful, as scientific, and as masterly as those of health. So the laws which regulate the infliction and allotment of suffering, are as unimpeachable as those which govern the bounties and blessings of Providence.

But when Mr. Bramwell's attempts at self-denial were made for the benefit of others, and without any oblique designs upon the soul, they were, at any rate, unquestionable in point of generosity. When he gave away the only top-coat he had, in cold weather, to one who needed it more than himself; or emptied his pockets to supply his neighbour's necessities; or relinquished the pleasures of study to visit the poor; or denied himself the comfort of a fire in his library, however cold the weather might be, in order to relieve an impoverished society from even that small expense—in all these, and many other cases, his self-mortification took the shape of true munificence. His purpose was not to pique himself, but to benefit others.*

It is needless to say that Mr. Bramwell was human, and therefore faulty in many respects. But on this point let us quote the remarks of one who knew him well. "Mr. Bramwell," observes Dr. Taft, "in common with every fallen child of Adam, had his infirmities; but it was one of the great employments of his life to have them eradicated; and for this purpose he used strong cries and tears before a throne of

* Mr. Dawson apparently considers Mr. Bramwell's early rising as an instance of self-denial. "He undoubtedly felt the allurements of a comfortable bed as strongly as others; but, like Samson, he broke the cords asunder." We cannot honestly rank this amongst the triumphs of Mr. Bramwell's reason or religion. It is true he rose early—but he also went to bed early. There was more energy displayed in those midnight risings, when he left his bed and prayed in the cold, with a blanket only thrown over his shoulders.

grace, till the world became crucified to him, and he to the world. If his Journal had been preserved, as he was so much better acquainted with his own heart than any other person could be, it is highly probable many defects would have been depicted, that no eye but his own and that of God had discovered. But whatever shades he might himself have discovered, there can be no doubt that they would have been completely lost in that blaze of excellencies which was visible to every one except himself. His praises are in all our churches. Making every allowance for his defects, his character approximated more nearly to perfection than that of any other with whom I have been acquainted. I have never seen his equal; and I entertain no expectation of beholding on earth his superior in everything which ennobles human nature, and renders man divine."

The following official notice of Mr. Bramwell was inserted by the Wesleyan Conference in its minutes for 1819:—
 "William Bramwell, was a man of eminent piety, of considerable preaching talents, and of great resolution and industry. In humility, self-denial, and a readiness to take up his cross daily, in ardent love to God, compassion for perishing sinners, and holy zeal for the prosperity of Zion, he shone with distinguished lustre. He most cordially believed the Methodist doctrines, and set them forth in the most prominent manner. He was an excellent disciplinarian, and ever aimed to promote the spiritual improvement of those among whom he laboured, both by precept and example.* . . . As he advanced in years, he grew in grace. His communion with God was constant, and as he approached towards the eternal world, he evidently ripened for the heavenly garner. His conversation was truly spiritual, especially towards the close of his life; and he often expressed an earnest 'desire to depart and be with Christ.' He was a man of much prayer, and strong faith, a burning and shining light; and lived in a blessed readiness for that sudden death, which removed him from earth to the unfading glories of heaven. This has comforted his bereaved friends, and enabled them to mingle sentiments of joy *for his gain*, with feelings of sorrow *for their own loss*."

We have seen that the ambition of William Bramwell was to become *in this world* 'as holy as David, serious as Jeremiah, zealous as Paul, and as loving as John.' And verily, if ever man in modern days strove with heart and soul to attain this

* We omit a sentence (of a denominational character) out of justice to Mr. Bramwell, and generosity to the writer of the paragraph.

glorious eminence, it was he. How far he succeeded—to what a height of purity he ascended, may be inferred from the striking coincidence not only of sentiment, but of language which marks the various testimonies to his character, inserted in the preceding pages. “Never seen his equal,”—is the splendid eulogy which has passed from lip to lip, and been echoed from almost every circuit in which he laboured. Qualify it as we may, it is but just to conclude, from all that has been recorded of his life and ministry, that in zeal, devotion, humility—in faith, piety, and self-denial—in consecrated toil and evangelical ardour, he was scarcely a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

* * * * *

And now we must ask, what have been the products of the brief existence which Providence allotted to William Bramwell on this earth? His fifty-nine years of probation have long since terminated: all its pains and pleasures, its trials and triumphs, are over:—the *consequences* only remain. What are these? For himself, then, we cannot doubt that the greatest, as it was also the most coveted result, is everlasting glory. It was for this prize that he strove so patiently, and fought so gallantly. For this, he despised the momentary pleasures of sin, and trod the thorny path of poverty, persecution, and self-denial. For this, he laid aside every weight—even the sins which did most easily beset him, and ran with patience his appointed race. For this, too, he enlisted in the army of Christ, vowed unceasing hostility to the Prince of Evil, and carried on an intrepid warfare with the powers of darkness as long as he could breathe. And now the race is ended, the battle closed. All of earth—life—trial—preparation—experiment, is over. *And he has triumphed!* He has entered into his rest. For the pilgrim’s staff, he has received the palm; for the glittering sword, the golden harp; for the heavy armour of the soldier, the white vestments of the saint. He is now amongst the happy multitudes who dwell perpetually in the presence of God, and greet their Maker with the ‘sounds symphonious’ of their ‘angelic harmonies.’ Nor least, perhaps, in glory, nor feeblest in his hosannahs! In that ‘bright pomp,’ he will doubtless shine conspicuous; * amongst those ‘blest voices, uttering joy,’ his will swell as loud, and sound as sweet as most. And this is

* Mr. Bramwell’s “extraordinary, perhaps unequalled, attainments in holy meekness for the inheritance of the sainted spirits in glory,” says one of his observers, “fitted him, under the rich grace of his Saviour, for a nearness to the throne; where, to the spiritual vision of common Christians, he will perhaps hereafter be *hardly cognizable*.”

to be *for ever!* No change, but in joy and in glory! Not a single tear shall be shed, nor a sigh heard throughout eternity! He can weep no more; his sorrows are all ended; everything that could pain, has already done its work during his short period of mortal existence. For nearly thirty years he has now been tasting the pleasures of Paradise; and would not this alone have repaid him for all the miseries endured in life? One moment, perhaps, of celestial enjoyment would, in his opinion, prove an ample compensation for a century of pain. And yet he has an ETERNITY before him! Far as his eye can reach, or his thought extend, all is glory—increasing, expanding, interminable glory!

As for himself, then, it is, and shall be, well with him. Now, we may ask, what were the results of his life as regards *others?* He was ever at his work, as we have seen. That work was the noblest of all,—it was the salvation of souls. To warn his fellow-creatures against the horrible fate which might be so easily incurred—to point them to a prize which, if won, would make their fortunes throughout eternity, was the task to which he devoted all his energies. The Spirit of God approved and assisted. His converts were numerous. In every circuit he entered, many were the soldiers of Satan who fled from that fatal service, and hastened to the standard which he uplifted. Mighty deeds were wrought through his instrumentality. “Perhaps,” observes Dr. Taft, “few preachers since the apostolic age, have been more eminently owned of God. I am inclined to think that he never travelled in any circuit in which he had not many seals to his ministry; in some of them he had many scores; and, in others, many hundreds. I have no doubt that THOUSANDS of his spiritual children welcomed him into heaven; and it is highly probable that a still greater number are left behind to deplore his loss.”

If, indeed, every preacher of righteousness be surrounded by his spiritual family in heaven—if the stars in glory are encircled by their satellites—the group which encompasses this man, must be large and luminous, though still incomplete. The harvest he reaped, was indeed ample for the toil and services of little more than thirty years in God’s vineyard. It is difficult to suppress a speculation as to the consequences, had he lived and laboured for a few years more. If the same success had attended his ministry, and the same rate of conversion had obtained, hundreds or thousands more might have been added to the church militant, and ultimately, it is hoped, to the church triumphant. *Might*,—what a painful conception is implied in that conditional word! How the

providence of God deals with such potentialities, and whether the same results are otherwise effected, we cannot know; but the thought that *if* this human instrumentality, which had already obtained such signal favour from heaven, had been permitted to operate with the like measure of approbation for a few years longer, multitudes more would have been saved, is oppressive, from the apparent simplicity of the contingency which it involves. Is it possible that a single soul has slept itself into perdition, which *might* have woken up under the stirring appeals of this minister, had he lived but to preach another sermon?

For Christians generally, the life of such an individual is charged with peculiar meaning. It furnishes another and a striking example of the victorious character of true faith. It shows how the soul may triumph over its adversaries—how it may escape from the petrifying influences of this world, and enjoy continual intercourse with Heaven amidst all the cares and distractions of life. It is valuable, too, as exhibiting the power of simple holiness, and the mighty results which artless piety can ensure. Whilst Intellect can at best but raise a man to a throne or a monument, pure Religion can lift him to heaven. Hitherto the merit of holiness has not been fully recognised upon earth. Men do not call, neither do they think it *greatness*. The time will doubtless come, though as yet it may be far distant, when the highest eminence will be accorded to the purest mortal. At present, we have not even attained the intermediate stage of transition—the full acknowledgment of *intellectual* merit. Once, physical power was the sole title to respect; next, physical power in combination with cunning and the lower faculties of the mind; and now, intellect in its more practical and mechanical applications, as instanced in the strategy of the warrior, the finesse of the statesman, or the skill of the inventor. Mankind still relishes the baser element more than the nobler; and Englishmen to this hour feel higher reverence for the blood-stained memories of their Marlboroughs and Nelsons, than for the more peaceful names of their Bacons and Miltons. Genius must have its day of honour before the reign of piety commences; and when that has paved the way for a better principle still, then will pure holiness be accepted as the first and greatest of human merits.

Hence the value of lessons, such as are taught by the lives of devoted men. Independently of their personal application, they contribute to the general movement which must take place before the idols of society are overthrown, and the true objects of veneration are ascertained and acknowledged. They

will teach us in time that a 'splendid homicide' is less admirable than a simple evangelist; and he who saves one soul, more honorable than another who destroys ten thousand bodies.

Saints are doubtless insipid to sinners. Yet, if this were the place, it might be easily shown that there is a world of interest, nay, of romantic greatness, in the position and pursuits of every true Christian, however humble he may appear in the estimation of the children of the world. Thus in William Bramwell we see a man who, according to a conventional judgment, would be ranked with the lowly and obscure; yet strangely enough, the individual with whom earls and dukes would have thought it undignified to associate, was the 'friend of God,' walked with his Maker daily, and conversed with him as familiarly as he would have done with a fellow-mortal. Without an illustrious ancestry, he claimed Jehovah for his father—he had been 'begotten again;' and short as was this pedigree, it was quite sufficient to vulgarise all the baby distinctions of Herald's College. Without wealth or territory, he possessed a pearl of incomparable price, and had more treasure laid up in heaven than any of the *millionaires* on earth—treasure of which he would not have bartered one mite for all the hoards and acres of this globe. With little more than bread and water for the supply of his physical wants, he feasted daily in spirit on celestial food, and drank of the nectar of the skies. Powerless as he might seem, he wielded an influence which was far greater than any mere political potentate ever enjoyed; he could grapple with the angel of the covenant and prevail over him, he could conquer Satan, and put to flight the powers of darkness; he could open the windows of heaven, and bring down showers of righteousness; by his prayers the sick were healed, and by his exhortations, sinners were won from the worst of perils, and snatched from the everlasting burnings. He passed through the world without attracting any particular attention, or producing any great sensation beyond his own class and church; yet Satan followed his movements with fear,* and trembled more at the voice of that unpretending minister, than he probably did at the fiat of kings, or the achievements of heroes. His death was unnoticed by millions, and his burial of course unmarked by any exhibition of national regret, yet he fell fighting more gloriously than Moore at Corunna, and went to a tomb on which

* Mr. Bramwell "was a veteran officer in the army of the 'King of saints;' and the motto given to principalities and powers would be, 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with Bramwell. If he fall, a host goes with him.'"—MR. DAWSON'S FUNERAL SERMON.

Heaven smiled more sweetly than it did on the sepulchre of a Nelson. He has left a name now remembered and cherished by a class only on earth, but a name which will never be forgotten by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of glorified spirits in eternity.

To the reader who *does* appreciate goodness more than what is popularly designated greatness, we would say, bear in mind that you may imitate, equal, and even *excel* this man of God. You may be more pious than he was. You may serve Jehovah better than he did. You may pray more fervently, labour more zealously, and triumph more gloriously. Satan will fly before you, as he fled before him. Heaven will honour you, as it honoured him. Your faith may be stronger, your love purer, your services worthier. You may not have wealth, influence, dignities, nor surpassing intellect—neither had he; yet now he shines illustriously as a star in glory; to the same sphere you may follow, and to a still higher rank you may attain. Are you ambitious? Mount! There are places yet vacant in Heaven. There are mansions which need tenants, crowns which wait for wearers, treasures which want owners, and honours which may be the prize of the first bold claimant. To secure all these, nothing more is required than earnest, devoted piety. It was by this simple lever that Mr. Bramwell moved earth, and flung it from him; by the same also, that he moved heaven, and made it his own. Lay your hands upon this mighty implement, grasp it with the same energy, and for you it will effect results as magical and momentous as it did for him. Christian soldier, take heart! You are waging a desperate warfare, it is true; you are passing through an enemy's country; you have fierce adversaries to meet and repel; all the grim terrors of this mortal state may be mustered in battle array against your immortal spirit; the legions of evil will dispute the passage to the celestial land; you must force your way, step by step, through hosts of deadly antagonists, ranged under the black banners of that triple alliance—the world, the flesh, the devil—which has made such havoc with humanity, and swept off myriads of men into the hopeless, endless slavery of hell. Do you hesitate? Does your spirit quail? Are you ready to despair? Look then at this bold champion of the cross, and act as he did! Go to the same arsenal, equip yourself with the same armour of righteousness, lay hold on the same weapons, and rush forth as valiantly to the same conflict. Clothed *cap-à-pie* in this celestial mail, you may smile at the darts of the foe.

With the sword of the Spirit gleaming in your hands, even devils will recoil. Strike, and with every blow an enemy shall fall! Thus shall you put to flight the armies of the aliens; one shall chase a thousand, and though hell poured forth its reserves to arrest your progress, by God's blessing you shall force a passage unhurt through the fiery throng and enter as a conqueror into the city of Rest! Fight the good fight of faith,—and the crown of glory shall be yours for ever!



EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

Gales from blooming Eden bear
And distant warblings. GRAY.

“There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.”

TENNYSON.



EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.



THE following compositions can scarcely be said to come under any *epistolary* denomination. Strictly speaking, they are not letters at all. We should rather call them prayers and homilies. They paid postage like grosser communications; but the mails of his Majesty George the Third perhaps

never carried a more ethereal commodity. It is impossible to read them without indulging some sentiment of wonder or surprise at the extraordinary devotion to spiritual matters which is everywhere manifested. In this respect, they furnish an admirable exposition of the man. We have his soul in undress. His heart is laid bare in all its simplicity. If there had been aught of affectation in his character, that could scarcely have infected his correspondence, and therefore the real and dominant qualities of the individual should be developed in the following extracts. No thought of future publication ever crossed his mind; the negligence with which he wrote, proves that they were never intended to be printed—perhaps never intended for any other eyes than those of the individuals to whom they were addressed.

To an unsanctified reader they may appear remarkable only for their dullness: to a devout Christian they will breathe a fragrance, not of earth, but of Eden. A truly pious person can scarcely read them without pleasure, and still less can he thoroughly digest them without profit. They show us how completely religion may possess the soul, and how profoundly it may engage a man's entire thoughts and affections. It is in vain that the writer attempts to discourse of earthly things; his mind slides off, and will not attach itself to any. If he forces upon himself some reference to secular matters, he

is scarcely able to persist for more than a sentence or two; his thoughts are again in 'heavenly places,' before he has uttered half he might have to say.

"Look at his letters," says Mr. Dawson; "what a solid mine of sterling and deep experience. 'No wood, nor hay, nor stubble,' but in every line there is either 'gold or silver, or precious stones.' I am sure I speak the words of truth and soberness when I say, there are few such letters in our language. That man's mind must be blinded by ignorance or prejudice who can read them with common interest. His soul must be in a deplorable condition, who, after a perusal of these epistles, lays down the book without admiration and astonishment at the grace of God in the experience of their author; and at the same time not feeling shame and self-abasement at his own superficial attainments in the life of God in the soul."

With respect to the language in which they are couched, much of it might be considered as savouring too strongly of sectarian phraseology, if uttered at the present day, and by a person less pious than William Bramwell. Like the dialect of the Puritans, however, it was once rich in meaning, and when used by simple-minded, earnest-hearted men, it did duty as well as if it had been the tongue of angels. The reader will readily perceive that there is a living soul beneath all, and that however plain may be the vehicle of expression, it acquires dignity from its connexion with a spirit so pure and lofty.

The letters marked with the * are now published for the first time. These are mainly the productions of his later years, and are therefore vastly superior in many respects to the others.

LETTER I.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Sheffield*, 1795.

I believe God has sent me here, but I cannot yet tell why. We have house, friends, and everything that we want in this way: there is an uncommon sociability among the people, and apparently much plainness and simplicity. But real religion, the image of God, is everywhere much wanting. Ever since I came, I have been among the Derbyshire hills, except the first night of my arrival, when I preached in Sheffield. The societies in the fortnight-ride are small; and, after diligent search (for I have met the societies at every place), I have not found one person that knows the virtue of Christ's cleansing blood. Yet there is great friendship; and, it appears, I am received by the people with much respect. I have had the Lord with me this fortnight at several places. Almost every night there has been a shaking among the people; and I have seen nearly twenty set at liberty. I believe I should have seen many more, but I cannot yet find one pleading man. There are many good people; but I have found no wrestlers with God. At two or three small places, we had cries for mercy; and several were left in a state of deep distress. I return to-morrow, to stay a fortnight in Sheffield. My wife has been at all the meetings in the town whilst I have been out; but no work of God is visible. All is quiet; and, I believe, nearly all the people are peaceable and kind. Indeed there is everything but depth of religion. They tell me there are at least three thousand hearers at the chapel on Sunday evenings. I see no cause for delay. I would, through God, do all as my last act; and, oh, pray, that I may see his arm made bare in this place! I do bless God for going with me into the country, and I hope he will be with me in the town.

II.—TO THE REV. GEORGE MARSDEN.—*Sheffield*, 1795.

The Lord has begun to work among you. I pray that nothing may hinder. Go on your way, using every prudent means. Speak evil of no man, neither be discouraged by any. Preach a present salvation, and pray for present blessings: the Lord always prospered this plan. Preach sanctification as a blessing NOW to be received by faith. On the day appointed for thanksgiving, the work broke out here in our chapel, at the evening meeting. Many souls had been previously set

at liberty in the classes, and at the prayer-meetings; but on that night, there was a general out-pouring of the Spirit. We desired all in distress to come into the vestry, when eight souls were delivered from the bondage of sin. Eight more received pardon on the Sunday. Monday was our love-feast; and near the close of it the power of God came upon us. We concluded at the usual time, but begged of all in distress to stay, and before eight o'clock it appeared to many good men that more than twenty souls were delivered: the work has gone forward every day since, less or more. In two classes, more than twenty experienced salvation. I have had clear evidence, and, to speak within bounds, I am persuaded of more than one hundred persons having found liberty, in three weeks. Oh pray for us that nothing may hinder! The Lord be with us all in this great work!

III.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Baslow, Nov. 19, 1795.*

My wife and Miss Rhodes are with me in the Derbyshire part of the circuit. There is a revival in most places, and in some of them it is a great one. I preached here last night in a new chapel for the first time, when five persons received the blessing of sanctification, and one rich man found mercy. Congregations are uncommonly large in almost every place. This revival, if attended to and cherished, crowds our chapels and houses wherever it takes place. What a deception to suppose the reverse! If when a revival breaks out, the world learn that we, the ministers of Christ, are opposed to it, then we cause destruction on every side. Mr. Taylor has received a letter from Newcastle, his last circuit. Mr. Smith informs him that Mr. Stamp had come over from Hull, and, after preaching, had told them of the revival in that town and of its continuance. He begged that the Newcastle people would pray for a communication of the same blessing that night. They did so, and the Lord came suddenly to his temple, and souls were soon brought into liberty. Mr. Smith says, this good work goes on rapidly in every meeting, to the astonishment of many. One of our friends has been at Birmingham, and informs us that the ministry of brother Marsden is attended with the power of God throughout the circuit. A revival has broken out, and continues to prosper. The last time I preached at Sheffield, I had the happiness of seeing the chapel much crowded, and was told hundreds could not enter.

This has lately been the case every Sunday morning. The good work proceeds.—Ann Cutler's 'Life and Death'* will be out next week. The profits are to be given to the poor. How many copies must I send you? You will have the allowance to give away to any of the poor people in your circuit. N.B. Without much prayer I shall certainly fall. Oh, let us wrestle for each other!

IV.—TO THE SAME.—*Sheffield, Dec. 17, 1795.*

I am more than ever astonished at the goodness of God. Truly, "His ways are past finding out." Several circumstances have transpired which would occupy too much of my time to relate; but I never can sufficiently praise his glorious name. The work in its manner has called me to great labour. I have been employed in giving tickets to about twelve hundred people in Sheffield; and, in some classes, many members have found sanctification. I have not met, I think, above three classes in which some have not obtained deliverance—sometimes five and more. This has been the greatest labour I have yet experienced. The last Sunday both chapels were filled; and at Garden-street, after preaching, the power of God descended. A cry went through the gallery. I left many in distress. I cannot tell what number received mercy. When I first came here I wrote to you against the circuit, because I saw no work of sanctification; but I am now astonished at the rapidity of this work in many places. I feel much concern for souls; and I have not lately gone out to tea or dinner without having had some persons purposely to meet us, whose souls, during the interview, have received salvation. I have scarcely had time to read a single page this month. The Lord help me to do his will! Gaining SOULS is yet the best employ. I feel much for Dewsbury, Stockport, and some other circuits. There never was a greater contrast in the world, than that which now exists among us. How it will end, the Lord knows: we must pray more than ever. Some preachers are now believing, and others are hardening themselves. Can these two parties labour together? No! there will soon be a change. "*We know we are of God;*" and many of our opposing brethren know the same, but they want the grace of submission. Oh Lord, hasten that time!

* See ante, page 21.

Dear brother, take courage. You are in your place. Do all you can to preserve the flock from destruction, and then be resigned. You will have another outpouring, and this will repay you. Pray for it, and use every means with patience.

V.—TO THE SAME.—*Sheffield, March 24, 1796.*

I hope you are still in the spirit of preaching and prayer. There are twelve hours in the day, in which men ought to work. Our time as ministers is the present: NOW is the season for our laying up a blessed store in heaven. I beg you will consider yourself a servant of God, sent into the world to bear the cross, to suffer reproach, to love your enemies, and to pray even for murderers. Oh, what compassion was in the mind of Christ! The same mind may be in us. "I pray for THEM," says Jesus. Oh, blessed prayer! I long to pray like him; and He can teach us by his Holy Spirit. If your soul is still increasing in faith and love, if you are still speaking and acting for a crown, to obtain a full reward, "blessed are you." I see myself still less. I really feel myself more helpless than I ever did. Oh, how am I ashamed! I blush before the great God. I see St. Paul soaring aloft in spirit, and am astonished at not having soared with him. But I will now arise and press toward the mark, if by any means I may obtain.—I say again, I am really ashamed of my little progress. A great work is still going on. We are obliged to try vast numbers. We use every means to know the wheat, and to preserve it in the early period of its growth from the tares. I hope that in this we shall be directed. Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us, and upon all the connexion: preserve us all in peace and love! May we all unite in supplications for the glory of God to fill our land, and let every nation see this blessed work!—Pray for us in your love-feast. I know that God heard Birstal for Sheffield, and I shall give proof of this in the last day.

VI.—TO MR. HARGREAVES.—*Sheffield, June 30, 1796.*

I am very desirous of more of the image of God.—I often think of the example of St. Paul,—but more of Jesus Christ. I believe it is our place to walk as he walked. I see that the

world is in a miserable state—none truly at peace, but they who leave all and follow him. Christ has done all in point of merit—but we must “ask and receive, that our joy may be full.”—I see more than ever, that those who are given up to God in continual prayer, are men of business both for *earth and heaven*: they go through the world with composure, are resigned to every cross, and make the greatest glory of the greatest cross. On the other hand, if not given up to God in prayer, every cross brings the greatest perplexity, and robs them of the little love and patience they enjoy. To be all alive to God is, as it were, two heavens: to be unstable, and not a *whole* Christian, is two hells. Oh, my brother, I hope you and your house will serve the Lord! I would advise you to consider the great privilege of the Gospel; and even beg, yea, beg with tears, that your house may be consecrated to God, through the preaching of the word and much prayer, and by having God’s servants under your roof. Remember the house of “Obededom.”

VII.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Sheffield, June 30, 1796.*

I received your letter with much joy. The Lord is taking some to himself, and preparing others for that change. It is the same in this place; many have lately escaped to glory, some of whom are leaders. The Lord is still with you in the circuit: I wonder at his goodness. “He will never leave us, he will never forsake us.” We are precious in the sight of God, when we receive his Son.—Oh, brother, continue steadfast in the will of God. Read, more than ever, the character of St. Paul. View him as a Christian, as a preacher;—Oh, what zeal, love, faith, patience, deadness to earth, and hope of glory! May I be more and more like him! I am still ashamed when I look at him:—Lord help me. My love for Birstal circuit has been abundant for some time; but I am obliged to stop my thoughts when I look at the lambs in Dewsbury. Oh! still pray for them and for all the connexion. We want nothing but more of the Spirit of God among ourselves. May the Lord pour it down upon our brethren at the Conference! The work still goes on, and deepens exceedingly in this circuit; souls are yet brought to God every day. Some remarkable conversions have lately taken place amongst the aged. I think I see more than ever I did of the mind of Christ in our family. O praise the Lord! But I see Satan

laying plots every week to hinder and destroy. The Lord yet rebukes him. Pray for us, that Sheffield may always act in union. I would have you take no care or step about your station; only pray over it in secret every day. I think Mr. Taylor is for my going to Conference; but upon that I have not yet determined. I have been to visit brother Nelson, and saw many brought to God. The state of things is low at Derby. The Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! May I meet you all in glory!

VIII.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Staveley, September 12, 1796.*

I always long to hear every particular from you, that I may have cause to mourn or to rejoice with you. Your station was with us; but the situation at Huddersfield outweighed every plea. This may be of God, and for his glory. I hope you are quite content, which makes every situation a heaven. I am sure the Lord will bless you with Mr. Barber, a man with whom I should wish to travel, and who will make everything comfortable to you, as far as he is able. Oh! my brother, I am more than ever ashamed of myself. I am mourning before the Lord, longing for a depth of salvation which I have not yet received. I do assure you, I am now inwardly on full stretch for heaven. I want the prayers of all. My soul is continually engaged with God. I can tell you, I am quite tired with my manner of life: it is so far below my privilege. To be cleansed from sin, is a preparation for growth. I want to be always among the company of angels. We certainly are surrounded with this glory, and we may enjoy a very great degree of the Divine presence. The Lord gives us peace through the circuit.—In standing quite still, I have once more seen the salvation of God,—but not without many a struggle in prayer. A work is going on; many have been lately brought to God, both rich and poor!—Glory, glory be to God! But we want a greater breaking-out through the circuit. I am sometimes tempted to think that the time is not come for the GENERAL SPREAD. Oh! how often has Satan told me, that the Lord will bring a great curse upon many persons before he will suffer the GREAT GLORY to spring forth. I wish you to answer me on this point. Notwithstanding great peace among the preachers, we certainly want, in general, that Spirit which God uses in saving the world; and how can we

be the means of the great glory, unless we have that Spirit given to us? I am constantly reasoning within myself respecting the conversion of the world, and I want to think yet more upon this subject. Mr. Taylor is with God, and brother Emmett is striving to follow him in love. I will labour to run after them with all my soul, and seek to do the will of the Lord every day.

IX.—TO THE SAME.—*Sheffield, March 3, 1797.*

I am now examining my state, in the same room where you found me. I do find that my soul enjoys more of the image of God. I am ashamed of one thing,—my unfaithfulness in public. I resolve, through grace, to speak more pointedly to the sinners, and to the gay; though I still see it right to do all in much love. O may I never soften or smooth down the truths of God!—Can you join me every day at two o'clock without fail, to pray for four things?—1. All that God has promised to us in our own salvation. 2. To station us the next year. 3. For all the Methodist preachers. 4. For the general spread of the revival.—I always think of you with joy. You see the nature, power, and effects of God's proceeding. Your fellow-labourers heartily join you in the same;—I think this is the very next door to heaven. We shall always have different faces; God is much at work in Sheffield, &c. Many have lately gone through the strait gate, some of whom were very great sinners. Mr. Miller is at present owned of God in an extraordinary manner. He sometimes receives reproof, but takes it well; is a perfect child in temper; and the blessed Jesus condescends greatly to honour him in his labours.

X.—TO THE REV. HENRY TAFT.—*Sheffield, Nov. 1, 1797.*

I rejoice in your prosperity. I bless the Lord for his goodness to the little flock. He cares for you, and will help you. I trust your own soul prospers more and more.—There is work for every day. The Lord waits to impart more of his love, and will give more to the hungry.—O my brother Taft! give yourself to him in much prayer and faith, keep yourself as much as possible composed, let not little things dissipate

your thoughts. Be fixed in God. The world will tempt and seek to draw you; but your work is for God—for heaven—for glory. O run the race! fight the battle! conquer through the blood! I believe you will receive the crown. If you are not called to preach, or exhort, or teach, you are called to live, to pray, to walk with God. Fear not, salvation *will* come; wait for all he has to give:

“Wait to prove his utmost will,
And have your heaven about you still.”

I am seeking the Lord every day. I am sure I grow in grace. This is my labour—to see God, and love him. My union is stronger than when I was with you. I have left all in his hands. I have no care but to please him. “I am dead and my life is hid with Christ in God.” I am more dependent than ever, see myself more and more, and can only say, “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Oh, the mind, the sweet mind of Christ! May I follow the Lord every moment!—I see the work deepen among his people; and for some weeks have seen souls saved nearly every day, less or more. I live above the division [Mr. Kilham’s Controversy] and wait the event in peace. The will of God be done—not mine. When all are humbled, we, I trust, shall shake hands, and all give glory to God. I feel much compassion—my bowels yearn for all men, and I can speak evil of none.

XI.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Sheffield, Nov. 30, 1797.*

I need help from God every moment. I see all my past doings are little indeed. I am saved through mercy, and do find a growing in all the graces. O how my soul feels for sinners! I could breathe my last in entreating them to turn to God. I often sink into love and weeping over them. My wife lives near to God; I am ashamed when with her. She has truly run before me. Oh, may I go on much faster in this blessed road of LOVE! It is LOVE, all love;—it is burning love to God and man! The Lord inclines many to hear. The sight of our congregations in both chapels would cause you to praise God. We have blessed seasons together. There is now a work upon many, and I hope it will end in salvation. I feel very much for many who are gone from us. Debate has subsided; but the number gone is great, and hundreds of precious lambs who were as near to me as my own flesh. I feel the most because

I fear they are now losing their life. Their ministry is not lively, —they cannot live long:—Oh, how I feel!—The Lord bless them; and though they have left us, may not one of them turn back into the world. I am thankful that you stand in the power of God; you know how to distinguish between what is precious and what is vile. Praised be God for this! I trust the light which you have received in the blessed work, will never become darkness. I hope you improve every week in preaching; this is also your privilege. Oh, my brother! resolve to rise early; let not flesh and blood hinder; gain this point, and all will fall beneath your feet. Read much; but write whenever you read,—have a book on purpose. Have all your skeletons of sermons in books, and have a small pocket-index to the whole. This will prevent your repeating the same things. Labour for something fresh every sermon, and yet nothing but **STRONG GOSPEL**. You must be a new preacher this year. I believe you will take the hint. The Lord is with you, and will be with you. I pray for you. May you pray for me! I live with God in Christ. I only wish to know and do his will in all things.

[Miss Barrett, to whom the next letter is addressed, was a lady accustomed to preach and exhort amongst the Wesleyans. Mr. Bramwell thought highly of her qualifications, and indeed, if these were to be measured by the results, they could not but be approved. The simplicity with which the former speaks of her superior working abilities, so different from the jealous feelings with which many might have regarded the services and successes of a female preacher, is eminently characteristic of the man.]

XII.—TO MISS BARRETT.—*Coverton, May 30, 1798.*

You and I shall be much tempted in this world; and we may be in the greatest danger in reasoning, where there is no rule for our direction. In this we can only act according to the best of our judgment, and then leave the whole in God's hands. You may think that, because you are not able to labour as some might expect, your stay will be troublesome to the friends; but, in this case, remember your all is the Lord's,—and this is enough for a Christian. You have the power of saying, "Thy will be done!" but you have not the power of saying, "I will labour where and as I please." I am fully satisfied you are in your place. I think I have seen this clearly since you came. Your way

is open, numbers receive the power. Oh, go on as your strength will permit; and may the Lord Jesus be with you! I have had some serious reflections that your time will be short, and, I think, shorter than mine. You do more work in less time; and I must have more time to fulfil my task. If I did more for God, I might go with you: I can say, "Amen, let me reach the same glory for ever!" I am still more convinced that the Lord would have us feel and labour like St. Paul, and leave all consequences in his hands. Numbers will never be saved without great efforts in the instruments: but oh, how mysterious is this! If so, let us pluck them as brands from the burning, and leave others to draw to God the next generation. I burn with desire to be useful in the world. Here I am; Lord, send me. I long to see you and my brethren. Our souls are united, and shall be for ever. Nothing shall separate between us and Jesus.—We shall be glad to see you next Monday or Tuesday week; the way is clear for you in this circuit. We pray that you may come in the power of God.

XIII.—TO MISS BARRETT.—*Nottingham, Sept. 22, 1798.*

I was sorry to hear of your sudden call. I hope your mind is kept composed. God hath given; he will take away when it pleaseth Him. Our fathers and our mothers are His. Oh, for submission to His blessed will in all things! This shows how uncertain we are in this world. I pray more: and will still cry, "Lord! make us meet for thy glory!" Every moment may we live to Him, and Him alone! I am giving myself to continual prayer. What will be the answer, I cannot tell; but shall wait to see his glory in the blessed Jesus. He is our all, and must bring all we need. I found things flat in Nottingham. Building chapels are hard times. Almost in every country place, I have seen the Lord work; and I do hope to see greater things than these. We all expect you immediately, when you are set free. The Lord bring you soon, that you may cast your net into this deep sea of iniquity, and bring to land a few souls for his glory! I long to show the world His blood, and then to stand before the throne of God. I pray that you, and every soul that speaks for the Lord, may cry in every place, "Prepare to meet thy God!" I have found very few in this circuit that know any-

thing about sanctification. What are we? God be merciful to us! O save us, both preachers and people!

[The next letter refers to some supposed breach of confidence on the part of Mr. Drake in divulging Mr. Bramwell's opinions on certain topics. That which follows is a noble recantation of a surmise which proved to be altogether unfounded.]

XIV.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Nottingham, Sept. 27, 1798.*

I hope you are well in body and mind. I am much ashamed of myself, because I did not come to see you; but I thought my way was not open at any time. In this I might be mistaken. There is another thing; I perceive that some preachers have not freedom with me, which makes me cautious, as I see they are in some pain in my company. The Lord knows the reason of this; and I think he has shown it to me. I always found the greatest union with you; but have some doubt whether, for some cause or other, that union has not been weakened. I always plainly told you my views of things: if you have opened my mind to others, in such things as ought to have been kept in your own heart, it may in some degree have broken our fellowship. But this I leave.—I long to be with you, that we may join our faith and power with God. I have been at Liverpool, &c. &c.—I saw his glory among men:—he is still the same God. I bless the Lord, I am saved every moment, and do declare to you, that my union with God is such as I never before experienced. I have given myself to continual prayer; and, in this circuit, I see souls awakened and saved nearly every day. God is working, and will continue to work, glory be to his name! My dear brother, my soul is enlarged. I think I could go through fire for the Lord Jesus. Lord send me; here I am. I have found but very few in this circuit that know anything of sanctification, excepting a few in Nottingham; but God will come. On this subject several of my dear brethren are more determined than ever. O great God, stand by them, and raise up a thousand to spread the flame!—This C—— has been a poor one. Many were afraid of God working—a scheme to weaken the revival, but it was not carried, nor ever can be. We shall rise above it all.—God is king, and shall reign over us.

XV.—TO THE SAME.—*Nottingham, 1798.*

Oh! I am thankful,—I cannot sufficiently praise God! I feel that I am the poorest soul that ever lived; I never was so ashamed in all my life; God be merciful to me! Oh! that I was with you to confess my fault! Can you ever forgive me? The nearest union is the most susceptible of JAR.* I wonder you can love me or forgive me. My heart is full, I do sink before God. Can you ever bear to see me? I have been tempted concerning you. I feared, I much feared, that you were caught in the snare; but glory, glory be to God and the Lamb for ever! I am in near union with Jesus. I do love him more and more. The Lord works nearly every night in some degree; but in several parts of this circuit we have many members not justified; and few in the country know anything about sanctification. The Lord ride on. O SAVE US ALL!—I expect to see you this Christmas, if the Lord permit; till then pray for me, and do write again, and assure me of your forgiveness.

XVI.—TO MRS. BRAMWELL.—*Sheffield, Dec. 7, 1798.*

I am stretching towards the *mark*; my soul continually goes out after the Lord; I am sure we are but just beginning to live, and believe we shall live like our Lord in meekness and love. Oh! what need of keeping up the strife every day! May nothing slacken our pace! Our fight is nearly over,—our crown will shortly be given. Let us live every moment free from all the world. We never bring such glory to God, as when we cast our all upon him. He loves to bear his children in his arms, and to see them always joyful. Oh, Ellen, trust in him,—pray to him,—work for him,—have no fear,—rush through all to save a soul from burning. I pray for you.—I have the whole family upon my heart. I trust Miss R—— will ever join us in seeking this latter day glory! May we all live as near to Christ as it is possible for the spirit in the body! Nothing shall in this world, for one moment, make us rest short of the mind of Jesus. I am sure you will see and know that I am with God in Christ Jesus. I am enabled, through grace, to love all more and more, and to love God in all.—Oh! keep this recollection of soul; let

* "The highest flames burn the most tremulously."—JER. TAYLOR.

nothing bustle the spirit; let nothing make you CARE; be always at His feet, waiting and longing to be with Him!—The Lord bless you and the children! Amen.

XVII.—TO MRS. BAISTON.—*Nottingham, May 23, 1799.*

I have promised to write to you, but oh! how slow in performing!—This, God knows, is too much like my other works—done with reluctance. I have sometimes thought much on this head,—whether I shall receive so bright a crown as those who so readily enter into the greatest matters. To preach, to pray, &c. &c. continue to be my daily cross.—Lord! thy work and will be done in me, and by me, more heartily. My faith, my love to Jesus, my union with the saints, and my prospect of glory, increase daily. For some weeks past I have been seeking to be ready, at any instant. I have received a persuasion that I shall go in a moment. Whether this be from my Father or not, I feel it has a good effect upon my mind:—I live for him. Do, my dear sister, pray,—yea, always in private pray, that my soul may receive and retain all the glory!—Amen, Lord Jesus! I hope you will still care for the feeblest child, the tenderest lamb. Never forget you were once weak,—wanting every prop, every prayer.—Look well to the lambs.—Your great work is to nourish these, and lead them on to glory. But at the same time view the blessing which is prepared.—Hunger, thirst, cry mightily to God for all he has to give. I am persuaded many draw back after the cleansing touch; and the cause generally is, their not determining to receive the WHOLE. Oh! see St. Paul,—“I reach forward:” hence, “I have kept the faith.” You have received blessings of the greatest value in their nature: but these may all be increased a hundred fold.—Oh, I want you to live in the holy place, in the nearest union, in the greatest *glory, being changed* from one degree of it into another. I have thought, that if I am spared, I may receive in one month a double weight.—I find all things removed that would hinder,—all things at work to my help; and I have confidence that I shall pursue to the utmost the great salvation. What have we done? All seems nothing.—I have stood to look back on all my works; but I cannot fix my mind on ONE that yields joy. I instantly look to Jesus, and in him I do rejoice.

XVIII.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Nottingham, Nov. 1799.*

I long to be personally present with you: yet I am not one day without your company in my heart. At the throne of grace, I will meet you every day at the time you mention: may our prayers evermore prevail! I feel for souls more than ever. In our meeting of local preachers at Mansfield, the last week, our first subject was “St. Paul’s intense desire for the salvation of souls; and whether it was not our privilege to cherish the same feeling.”—I argued that it was. In the band-meeting, several preachers received sanctification.—Brother Longden came with us to Nottingham. In the select band, on Friday, seven received full salvation; and several more this week.—Our chapel is crowded. I am told that many go away, because they have no seats; but crowded chapels alone will not satisfy. Oh, how I long to see souls saved! Some places in this circuit still remain unmoved, whilst many persons in other parts receive perfect love. Mary Barrett has not yet arrived, and I do not know when she will. The Lord stand by and prosper every instrument employed in his work. I will, if possible, either exchange with you, or pay you a short visit. But our numerous collections compel preachers to remain at their posts.—I have extracted from D’Oyley’s translation of *St. Chrysostom on the Priesthood*, a small work, which I entitle, ‘THE SALVATION PREACHER.’ I have given it into the hands of a printer, and expect it will be published in the course of three weeks: the price will be about two shillings. You shall have a copy. I wish that all our preachers and people would read the work, and act accordingly.

XIX.—TO THE SAME.—*Nottingham, June 18, 1799.*

I am glad to hear that all is well, except some little decline in your spirit; and I hope it is but little. I have always seen action to be your life, and am persuaded this is the case with most.* I feel we cannot live in all the union without a full improvement of every grace. Is your present situation calculated for improvement? Can you work? Can you give full scope, if I may so speak, to the power which worketh in you? Are you in the least afraid of consequences? I know we are nothing in the sight of God, and all the UNCTION (a

* In this world, God only and the angels may be *spectators*.—BACON.

word which you feel, but which is little known) is from God. I think you submitted at first to the following reasoning:—"This people have rejected the life.—*Secondly*. The preacher now with me will oppose. I cannot make my way through all this. I will quietly go on, and yield at least for a season." Did you not, my brother, suffer your locks to be shorn in this way, and then become like another man? I know you wish me to write freely. I do so, because you are in my heart daily, to live and die with you. My dear brother, I have many things to say to you; and I hope you have some to say to me. If we should not be stationed together, or nearer each other after Conference, I will change circuits with you, for about a fortnight, which may do us both much good, and may be profitable to the people here and with you. Great things are impending still: I have seen the reason of the last convulsion. Of this, I think, I have little doubt. I am nearer the Lord, and have a daily working. Oh! may I praise him! Pray much for me. I see good done:—The Lord saves, and will save. Fear not: you cannot tell what God may yet do by your "RAM'S HORN." Some walls, I believe, shall yet fall before you. Love every man: but let not an angel shackle you. I hope dear Mrs. Drake is well, and much with Jesus, and that it will not be long before I hear from you or see you. Let us live in the closest union, and use every means to improve it. This circuit, I suppose, will want two preachers. It is probable that I shall stay, if I live so long; but I am less than ever careful where I am placed. May our stations be of God!—O may they be of God!

XX.—TO THE SAME.—*Calverton, 1800.*

I do mourn with you; I want to watch and weep by your side, over souls coming to Jesus. The Lord knows the reason why Otley does not submit; but "*thou shalt know hereafter.*" Oh, for patience! a grace never more wanted than at those seasons! Is it possible that, in such circumstances, a soul can live? Is it possible that your soul can grow in grace? It is. I do believe.—"Lord, increase our faith!" It rejoices us that dear sister Drake lifts up your trembling hands; I pray that her faith may not fail. The Lord keep you in the closest union! You will soon have done your work; and great labour with much suffering, may increase your glory, more than great labour with much rejoicing. "Lift up your head, your redemption draweth nigh." I have the pleasure

to inform you, that a great work of the Lord is going on at present in this circuit. Numbers are quickened,—sinners awakened,—souls justified,—and many receive and walk in perfect love. In following sister Barrett this week, I found ten saved at one place, twenty at another, five at another, &c., &c. I never knew one man so much blessed as this young woman is in the salvation of souls. Brother Pipe and brother Timperley are zealously employed every night in seeking lost souls. I sink at Christ's feet, and say, "Glory! Glory!" Nearly all the dead, small places in the circuit, are quickened again; and a considerable number from the world are coming into the Church. Mr. M'Allum writes me, that a good work is going on in the Leicester circuit:—he has lately joined one hundred and forty members, and is now laid up through much labour. I have been to see Mr. Reynolds in Ashby circuit; at some places the work broke out, and will, I think, proceed. Sheffield stands fast; but no great work. Mr. G. Smith, after about four months' crying, wrestling, and weeping, now sees the work running like a flame through a great part of the circuit, and many are saved. Liverpool and Manchester sink; and London also, after having had a few drops. In some parts of the Newark circuit there is a good work; likewise at Hinckley. Thomas Shaw is all alive; the Lord is with him. Oh! my dear brother, we may have more. I hunger, I thirst, I never had more heavenly enjoyment. My wife likewise grows in grace. O praise Him! It appears I must continue to watch. I wait to see you: can you come? Tell me. Mr. Miller rises from his weakness. Souls are saved, and many more lately. But I must see you, to tell you all.

XXI.—TO THE SAME.—*Nottingham*, 1800.

I have been confined some days through sickness; but hope in a little time to be able to labour again. I shall be very thankful if our lot be cast together the next year. Should we use any means to bring this about? I am near the Lord. To me all things are alike from Him, whether sickness or health. Oh! may we improve all to His glory!—I am certain we have not yet received the whole. Should we not reach forward every day? Nothing can satisfy us, but the greatest glory. Forget all things behind; look forward. God is waiting to impart it. My soul hungers still more. My dear Drake, I am less in my own eyes than

ever you knew me. I hope you will see the meek and gentle *Lamb*,—yea, may you see the Lord Jesus,—living and walking in my vile body. Oh! pray, still pray every day!—We shall prosper if we pray. The Lord gives us one heart and one way in this circuit; his blessing is among us;—may it much increase! One man, who had been seeking salvation five years, came a hundred miles to see me last week. I never saw one sunk so low in unbelief. He made no struggle, but seemingly gave up all. On Saturday night the Lord saved him. Oh, the change! He is gone, to tell his friends what God hath done for his soul.

XXII.—TO THE SAME.—*Taghill, Oct. 16, 1800.*

I am striving every day to meet you in the kingdom of glory. I often feel much for you; and, if I could, I would immediately come to see you. My intense and increasing love to my dear friends, borders a little upon the painful, because of absence; yet I do not want to be unclothed, but clothed upon. My soul longs for the *country*,—the *heavenly* place. Sometimes I am tempted that all my way is wrong, and there must be a nearer way. I feel grace comes only by little, and but a little at once. Yet I never lived so much with Christ, so much in God, as at present.—I do assure you, I feel nothing but an inclination to offer prayer and praise. Oh, bear with me! My soul rises as I write. The Lord is working here much in the midst of great distress. A famine is near our habitation. The poor are in great want, because of the high price of provisions:—yet we do not know that any Methodist in Nottingham has been concerned in the late riot.—God is with us, and comforts us in all our troubles. All is peace at the present. Public tranquillity was restored, without the loss of one life, or any person being injured, except one who has now recovered. The Lord bless you in Halifax. I durst not say one word about your station, believing that your proper place was Halifax. I trust you will labour with all your soul, and see a great work of God in every place. Do you retain the blessing of perfect love, and abundantly increase in it? Do, my dear brother, let us live! Oh! live every day near the Lord. Drink deep, continue instant in prayer, wrestling prayer, strong cries and tears before God! May we receive all the Lord can give us.

XXIII.—TO MR. TATHAM.—*Leeds, October 26, 1801.*

I think of you, the society in Nottingham, and the circuit, every day. I pray for your increase, your victories, your salvation. I know our weakness, our fears, and the number and power of our foes. The Lord is for walls and bulwarks around us. We are safe, and ever shall be safe in him. Let nothing draw us or drive us from him. May we fix our feet upon him, and remain unmoved. The storm was great, the thunders loud, the cries of blood alarming. But in this, how soon the great Jehovah can hush the universe, and cause the wild beasts to return to their dens in peace. A momentary calm calls for our loudest praises. But my view is, that all hands should fly to prayer, yea, every soul prepare for the greater onset. Devils have their plans, and never work more effectually than when all others are quiet. May you, your dear family, and all the church stand fast against the good words and fair speeches, arising from the deceiving spirit of infidelity, now sent into every corner of our world, and in many places received with open arms, by those who, of all others, ought to trample the monster under their feet. Good God! Shall a Hopkins say, "That at the fall of popes, this darkness shall spread, and for a season prevail over many, and the true church hide itself in a corner till the indignation be overpast?" Fear not, we shall see in our faithfulness, the glory; and shall live under the sunshine of love, whilst thousands dwell in the spirit of wrath. I am fixing my soul on God. I am learning to live unmoved. I am increasing in feeling for all, and yet my feeling is of His Spirit. I never was more tempted. Yet I mostly overcome. Sometimes scarcely. Over this I mourn. I pray more than ever, and find it needful so to do. I live in union with my fellow labourers, and this without having my own way. God is with us; and we see *some good, and wait for much.**

 XXIV.—TO THE REV. Z. TAFT.—*Thorner, near Leeds, Nov. 9, 1801.*

I received your letter with comfort to my mind, and pray that you may continue this freedom with me. I trust we shall derive some blessedness from our union in Christ. You are right in taking Mr. S—— with you in every action for the

* Rev. S. Dunn's Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Tatham, p. 164.

church. In this you will be calm and confident in your labours. I would advise you to write a strong invitation to sister Barrett, who is now at Manchester, labouring in all the chapels in union with the brethren; and, I trust, with much profit to many. This must be done with Mr. S——'s concurrence, or she will not come. I rejoice at your determination, that nothing shall take from you that which, of all other things, is the most useful to a preacher—the real life of God. You may read, write, study, and receive all knowledge, and yet retain the liberty of the Gospel. This is consistent with, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” It is quite necessary for us to be *workmen*, in order to convince the churches that *life* is neither *ignorance* nor *sloth*. Hold no meetings altogether public, except preaching. Dismiss all who choose to go at the appointed time; and then meet the society, or have a prayer-meeting, as you may think proper. Rise early, and wherever you can, have morning meetings. I wish you to improve in every way. Another thing I would say—form no connexion with any woman, till you have fully made up your mind that you can marry her. Be a man of God; a weighty man of God; whatever you may receive, be equally as earnest for more. Present our kind love to brother S—— and his dear partner. May the Lord bless you all! Amen.

XXV.—TO MISS BARRETT.—*Thorner, Nov. 17, 1801.*

I heard of your being at Rochdale with success. I understand you have freedom at Manchester. You will do well in not staying there too long, except you visit other circuits, and then return for a season. I have long thought that your labours may be attended with greater and more lasting blessings, in the following way:—Suppose you were to conclude sooner in the evening, go to rest sooner, and sometimes meet all that would come in the morning. A number who receive good through your labours, and who love you, sink deep into sloth from your example of lying in bed. Not considering your labours, but following your practice as a plea, they afterwards sink a whole society. I think this may be prevented. Unless the people improve time, they never can stand long; and the greatest mean in the world is, rising early, and spending some time with the Lord before worldly business commences. I want all your fruit to abide, or, at

least, the greater part. Now, as the great work of our salvation depends on our diligence, and as the people will look at our example, even years after we leave them, is it not possible that you, and all of us, may show this example to the churches? But there can be no harm in trying; and this is the least you can do. *First*, to dismiss the people—all who choose to go after preaching. *Then*, to have what kind of meeting you choose, but to dismiss them again in an hour. *Then*, to go yourself positively. If any remain in distress, leave the work in the hands of others. Retire, and as soon as you have got supper, go to rest, having previously published that you will meet all that will come, either in the chapel or in some house, in the morning. Let this be sometimes done, but never lie long in the morning, unless you are sick. You will stand your labour better, by being often at it, than by being too long at the same time. God is working at Leeds, and in some other places. We have drops.

XXVI.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Leeds, Dec. 16, 1801.*

Respecting your great cross—if you can receive it in the Lord, and with sweetness meet the rod, it may produce an “exceeding weight of glory.” Nothing but much more prayer will enable you to surmount the trial, but this is possible; and, in improving all things in this way, the greatest good will be the effect. Oh, my brother! time is short, and we will improve it. Many are departing in different places, and the next call may be to us, “Come up hither.” I never saw such need to be always ready. I have given myself to the Lord lately, a daily sacrifice, and am receiving him for my all in all. I do live with him, and wait every day till my change come. I see where I have frequently misimproved the means. I have not at all times reaped the full benefit of the cross; but I am ashamed and confounded, and sink before the Lord in deep humility of mind. My wife is truly devoted to the Lord, and little John is a comfort to us. Numbers here and in some places in the circuit, are turning to the Lord. Yet I am often much tempted to give up the whole. Preaching is my cross; indeed, I wonder how I ever began, and how I have continued so long. But truly it is the Lord, who hath helped me hitherto. Oh! do continue to pray for me in private, and in your family. We have great need to guard against our natural turn; yet we know what it is,

and, through the blessing of God, may every day overcome. I trust you retain all the life, and love, and power, you ever had. Be quite free with the Nottingham friends; the more freedom you make, the better it will be.

I think you should meet in close band with brother Miller. Suppose you meet on the Saturday; and as you are all in the same house, this will always remove any little jealousies that may arise, and will preserve you in perfect union. If any trifling difference should take place, crush it instantly. Rather bleed than show any shyness. You will bear with me. I know what it is for two families to be together in the same house. Be always willing to own any little fault, and beg of each other to show everything that may seem to be amiss. This will tend to your great and mutual good.

XXVII.—TO MISS BARRETT.

From a full persuasion of your call in an extraordinary way, and believing that the design of God concerning you is to spread the flame of heavenly love in our connexion, I write to you with all freedom on a certain subject, which has given me much concern. I understand you have some serious thoughts about marrying. I am led to think that this proceeding would prevent the design of the Almighty concerning you. Fully understand me; I do not mean that it is wrong to marry, but I think it would prevent in you the answering that great end of your call. In the first place, your situation would become *local*. Now, I am certain that this is not your place with respect to doing general good. You would soon become in a great degree useless. In the next place, you may have the cares of a family; but you would not have that influence amongst members of your own sex. I conceive you can only think of altering your state upon one ground—and that is, “I am become obsolete! My work is done! I am shut out! I can do no more! I am called to give it up!” If you think so, I think differently. A number of places will yet receive you; and I think your way is more open this Conference than ever it has been. I beg that you will write me all your heart; and, if you please, I will immediately consume your letter after reading it, and will keep the whole in my own mind. As I am concerned for you, write soon. I am quite ignorant at the present why the Lord has kept me here. Things are low indeed in this circuit, and

means must have been used to make them as they are. Of this we will say nothing; only pray for me. I must, in a few weeks, if spared, strike home, and leave the whole to God. I see hell will rise: but our God is almighty. Keep this letter in your own mind. I beg that you will come this way, and go with me to several places, before you go, or as you go to Nottingham. I have found much fruit in Birstal circuit. The Lord bless you. Amen!

[Miss Barrett soon afterwards married the Rev. Z. Taft. Although Mr. Bramwell thus endeavoured to dissuade her from matrimony, on the ground that she would be better employed in proclaiming the Gospel than in practising domestic duties, he subsequently expressed his conviction to Mr. Taft that the "union was of God." The above letter, however, exhibits his anxiety that no useful labourer—male or female—should be withdrawn from the vineyard of Christ, unless absolutely necessary.]

XXVIII.—TO THE REV. Z. TAFT.—*Leeds, Nov. 30, 1802.*

I thank God for the consolation. He has delivered you, and will deliver even to the end. Salvation is of the Lord. Give him all the glory; and if you keep quite humble, he will preserve you from every word and work which has the least tendency to excite disgust. You know not what you have to do. One day of your life will, in future, tell for ever. Be always on your watch-tower, and continue in prayer, and you will see greater things than these. I see still greater things in Leeds. Many are saved in the town, not so many in the country. I have not the help I want. I say sometimes, "Woe is me! for I am a man beset with opposition from all the powers of hell!" You would be surprised what plans I have discovered to prevent the general crush; but I see shakings through the whole. The work does not extend as I could wish. Here I mourn and wait the hour. I never lived so much with God as at present. I can say, my life is prayer, and much in agony. I am waiting for my change; and yet, I sometimes think, my greatest work is to come. Oh, may I be ready for life or death! I do assure you, you have numbers of friends who will help you and your dear partner by their prayers. Fear not. Whilst I fast, you will find it needful to live well. Be cheerful and thankful.

*XXIX.—TO MR. WILKINSON.—*Wetherby, 1804.*

The Lord abundantly blesses us, and we see some work—some souls saved; but we are hemmed in on every side. This is to me a resting-place from labour, as I cannot toil in my usual way. I am giving myself to prayer and reading when at home—I never had more leisure for this. You have reason to praise God for the prospect at Sheffield. God is saving some, and I trust will break through all, and show you His glory. I am persuaded He will. I have seen the state of the church in this kingdom—what may be done by us as instruments? Through the blessing of God on our labours, we shall see, I believe, a spiritual work, but not at the present. What we cannot cure we must endure, and make a proper use of all dispensations. We shall see greater things in our own souls. You know how often I have seen that glory—so have you. I hope you now keep the fulness of the Spirit? Have you the clearest witness? Have you all your edge—the kindness—the love—the union—the Lord your all? Griffith is your father; Miller, your brother; and Taylor, your servant. God bless them all, and be with them.

XXX.—TO MR. JOHN ANGRÁVE.—*Hull, May 30, 1804.*

I was comforted in hearing of you and the family. I believe you continue in the same way, and will "*mind the same things.*" I have often been edified in reading St. James, especially that part in which he describes the FATHER OF LIGHTS as being "*without variableness or shadow of turning.*" Oh, what a God! What truth,—what certainty of receiving the full salvation! He knows how liable we are to mistrust, and has accordingly discovered himself in such a way as to remove all doubt from every mind. I hope your faith is much stronger. Never forget this proper way of life. Fix your mind, and live in the constant act. Argue yourself into this way. Remember, you have had servants under you who obeyed your orders; and if God speak, who or what shall not obey? All is yours, and you may have your all. Take any part, but still endeavour to obtain the whole. Continual prayer will bring the grace for this purpose. Knock often, knock hard, and come boldly. Do not say, "I have been morning and night," but several times, yea, "*seven times a day call upon him.*" Oh, this prayer, this faith, this God, this

heaven! I hope my dear mother, Mrs. Angrave, will meet me when all our sorrows end. A little time longer, and the victory will be ours. I cannot forget our early morning services. God was truly with us, and he will now be with her. Our Heavenly Father overlooks a thousand weaknesses, and saves the humble in spirit. The Lord bless her with the greatest salvation. May all your house be devoted to God, and all your children fear the Lord! How can you praise him, how can you love him enough! The Lord is with us here. I may say, numbers have been saved. There is a good pruning, and some planting amongst us. In the meetings in general, some are saved—and all nearly in the same way. My wife lives much nearer the Lord, and helps me in the work. I must say to you, that I am less than ever; yet I feel much increase of the power and love of God. I shall meet you shortly, to part no more. The Lord directs us in all things for his glory, and the good of the church.

XXXI.—TO MR. CRANSWICK.—*Hull, November 29, 1804.*

I think of you and the families every day. I frequently want to know how you all are. Satan will use a thousand means to damp our love. He will strive to make all things bear a gloomy aspect; and will tell you that you may as well give it up, and that neither Deighton nor any other place will ever be better. But though you cannot save all or many, yet one soul saved is of the greatest importance. The churches, though small, are of infinite value. Remember your own salvation; never sink, never lose the least prayer. It is praying continually, that keeps the mind. I am more convinced of this than ever. Oh! let God have the first and the last!—Your dear wife and all your precious little children are his: strive to lay them all in his arms every morning; make the act on your knees. God will answer. He will make all your way plain. You will see his glory. I know it is a strife indeed, to keep faithful amidst unbelief. Do all your work about the house with as few words as possible; but still be kind to all, even to the unthankful;—you will find the great benefit of this. Live to God; be entirely given up to him in all things.—Oh, let us take each other into God, and never break the heavenly union.

XXXII.—TO MR. W. BURROWS.—*Hull, Nov. 27, 1805.*

May grace and mercy be multiplied to you and your family! I have thought of you almost every day. Great is the mystery of godliness, and great is the mystery of Providence! We know little, and we frequently practise less than we know; this is our great loss. But oh, the forbearance of God! How unwilling to destroy us! How ready to pardon, to bless, to cleanse us from all sin,—yea, from all the evil nature! He is never weary with comforting, and filling the souls of his children. I wonder at his love,—his great work of love to man. I am more than ever astonished at God and his dealings;—his ways are past finding out. Salvation ought to be our delight, and how to be saved to the uttermost. Oh, how great the dishonour to his name, even for one moment to disbelieve! I am more and more shocked at the idea of unbelief! Death and darkness, the world and sin, are the immediate effects; while life and light, heaven and holiness, are the effects of faith. I hope you are going on, striving, running, fighting and believing; and that you are a weak man made powerful, a poor man made rich, an unhappy man made to rejoice evermore. My dear brother Burrows, what are you? where are you? I hope you are all alive, lying at the feet of Jesus, saying, “What is my next work, Lord?” You see the glory, you know the promise, and you have proved that God is true. Never faint; “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” God will come, yea, he will shortly come for us. Be ready every moment for the joy of your Lord. Never sink with others; it is our greatest glory to stand, even alone. I bless God, I grow in grace! I live in union with Christ, and am much nearer the throne. I am more than ever pursued by Satan: I fight daily, and hope to overcome. I see the Lord working in this circuit more than at the beginning; but the work is not general. Souls are saved; but, oh! I want to see much greater things. I never had greater power in preaching. Pray, pray, pray for me.

XXXIII.—TO MRS. BAISTON.—*Hull, Jan. 4, 1806.*

I understand you are doing well in your own mind. But ever remember what great things the Lord can do for us. O the veil that is upon us, till the increasing light shines! I am astonished, how little we can know at once. Yet do not faint, do not

grow weary, still strive. The greatest salvation is yours, only receive. For if it is step by step, you will at least gain one every day; and this will shortly bring you into all the fulness of God. Be always labouring; and labour will be joyful, yea, exceedingly joyful. My dear sister, do rise a little more early. Do you strive to have all things ready for the day? I do not mean for two days, (you will not bear that,) but for one day. "Take no thought for the morrow." If you receive what I call "the full composure" in the morning—the mind stayed upon God, the solid rest,—this will carry you into all your little concerns with the utmost patience, and the daily cross will be the blessed means of increasing your heaven. And this is a constant heaven; this is your place, to have God your all. I have seen much more lately.—I dwell in God, and wonder that I did not feel what I now feel, twenty years ago.

XXXIV.—TO THE REV. JOSEPH WILSON.—*Hull, July 4, 1806.*

You have frequently been greatly upon my mind. I was much afraid you went out [as a preacher] too soon; but I hope every thing has turned out for the glory of God, the good of your own soul, and for the salvation of numbers. I do pray, that this blessed end may be answered in all your labours. The Lord can and will help you, if your eye be single. This is the time for your improvement. Give yourself entirely to the work. Rise early. Continue in prayer, in earnest prayer. Keep all your life, all your zeal; yet never be wild. Go on your way. Speak evil of none. Never debate about the work. "Be a lamb dumb! open not your mouth." Live in entire sanctification,—all your heart, God's throne. Never grieve Him, or cause Him to depart from you. Take care how you act towards women: keep your eyes, your heart from wandering. Determine, if you need it, upon fasting. Keep your body under. Be dead to all. Be a man of God. I believe I shall have joy, great joy, on your account. May it be so for ever! Procure Blair's Lectures; they will cost you more than a pound. Read them with much care. Keep to plain words, yet not mean ones. Strive to save souls in every sermon. They are the best preachers, who bring souls to God.

XXXV.—TO THE REV. J. ARMITAGE.—*Durham, Nov. 3, 1806.*

I have received your kind letter. I praise God that my dear sister Armitage is so much recovered. I hope she will pray always, and her soul will grow abundantly. Say to her from me, "Be ready; yea, be always ready." The Lord bless her more and more! I am at the present given to prayer. A great prospect offers in this circuit. Cooke's chaff had nearly blinded the people. Crowds come to hear; their eyes begin to be open. In one love-feast last Sunday, there was a great shower,—ten persons were brought into liberty. I do not know how it may end;—if as it begins, we shall have a great work. We have too good a house in Sunderland, and the friends are too kind. I have had to watch and fast, or should soon have been ruined with good things. I hope you continue to pray much, and would have you determine to improve your preaching. I know you may. Read, write, study, when you have proper time. Live in nothing short of a clean heart. Be a weighty man of God. You have much to do. Do all to the Lord. Lose nothing in your business;—I mean, lose no ground when in your business. You need not.

XXXVI.—TO MR. W. BURROWS.—*Sunderland, 1806.*

Oh, what shall we do, our Saviour to love? I grieve that my love is no stronger,—that I am no more like Him. I wonder at his glory, and sink before Him with shame. How is it that the soul being of such value, and God so great, and eternity so near, we are yet so little moved? Can you answer this? I never was so much struck with the word of God as at present. The truth, the depth, the promises, quite swallow me up. I am lost in wonder and praise. My soul enters into Christ in this blessed book. His own sayings take faster hold of me than ever.—I could read, and weep, and love, and suffer; yea, what could I not suffer when I thus see Him? Justification is great,—to be cleansed is great,—but what is justification, or the being cleansed, when compared to this being taken into himself? The world—the noise of self—all is gone; and the mind bears the full stamp of God's image. Here you talk, and walk, and live,—doing all in him and to him. Continual prayer, and turning all into Christ in every house, in every company,—all things by him, from him, and to him! O my dear brother! I hope you are doing well,—

prospering in health, in your family, in business, in salvation. You will have daily inconvenience; but this will be the grand means, yea, the loud voice,—“Pray, pray!” and continue in it, plead in it, weep in it, groan in it.—You know the way; yea, the Lord hath shown you the gospel, the great salvation, and you cannot rest as others, or be happy as others. No, you must have all; and nothing less than all will quiet your mind. Never grow faint. Keep the same action, the same labour, for the good of souls; the burning love, which will make you rise early, yea, and sometimes late take rest. If things grow slack, Satan suggests, “Nothing can be done!”—I answer “much may be done.” Ploughing, sowing, weeding, pruning, &c. &c., may be done; and this will give us hope of a blessed harvest. Go on, do all in love; but go on, never grow weary in well-doing.

[The following letter relates to an individual who had laid himself open to some charge which, in Mr. Bramwell's opinion, disqualified him for the Wesleyan ministry. The advice it contains was given in answer to an application from Mr. Drake.]

XXXVII.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Sunderland, 1807.*

I received yours with much concern, and am rather at a loss to know what you should do in the affair you mention. Yet, *in the first place*, that your labours may be in some degree profitable, give up all conversation about that business in every house through the whole circuit, and never hear it mentioned, even by your most respectable friends: they will see directly your design in this, and will unite with you in crushing the evil. I think you should tell * * all your mind. But how can you, as an upright man of God, keep it from the district and Conference? I do not see how you can; this must be left to your serious consideration. *Again*, I do not see how you can travel with him another year; this also must employ your deepest thought. I am now persuaded that he ought not to be a preacher amongst us; but there will be a difficulty in removing him from his post. After all, I believe that it has been owing to a sudden fit of envy, and a degree of revenge, which is a fruit of the former, and will ever seek the destruction of him who is the superior. I have seen enough of this. But let us love, pray for, and forgive our enemies, and let us live continually with God. The Lord

direct you in all things! Amen. I hope you will retain all your faith and patience. The nearer we come to God, the more sensible we are of the least sin or temptation. I find it the best to dwell continually in God, feeling in the soul that all is given up, and depending upon God our Saviour for all things—never leaving our place, never diverted from our object, and having the closest union. Earth is then a continual heaven. To be always fully prepared for glory, is our privilege in this world. Oh, the salvation, the great salvation! who can explain it? All evil gone, all grace imparted, all hell subdued, and Christ continually glorified! Entire sanctification is much departed from us in general as a body—from the pulpit, the Magazines, &c. What can be done? We have added, since Conference, 500 members. There is a great work in several parts of the country, but not so general in the town. Yet the congregations are astonishing. Our chapel is the same size as Oldham-street chapel, Manchester. We have two more chapels, and every seat is let in all the three. I am surprised at the crowds who attend.

XXXVIII.—TO MR. BURNLEY, *Boston.*—*Sunderland,*
March 20, 1807.

It has been upon my mind for some time to write to you, for I do not forget my friends. No; I find increasing union with them, and sometimes greatly desire to see them, that we might wrestle in prayer for each other, and receive great power from the Lord to pursue our way. A little time longer, and the battle is won; we shall, I trust, fully overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Evil nature must be destroyed, and the Lord is able to effect its destruction. He who made the world with a word, can save with a word; and nothing but unbelief can prevent our full salvation. Oh, how sweet, how calm, how quiet, when all the war of sin and evil is over! I hope your soul will live in this view. Pray, oh, pray, my brother! Never—no, never, quit your hold. Time is nearly over; and if all the glory belonging to this fulness of God be lost, it will be lost for ever. I am astonished that we do not pray much more—and believe much more—yea, that we do not live every moment as on the brink of the eternal world, and in the blessed expectation of the glorious country. I hope you will pass through things temporal with your heart fully fixed “on those things which are above.” When cleansed

from sin, we seem just beginning to live; and then to have the mind always stayed upon God, never distracted by earthly things, then to "grow up into Christ, our living head in all things," nothing seen or felt but HIM—all things in him and to him; this is Heaven begun on earth! Our glorious dispensation should lead us to think, to consider, to pray, to praise, to wonder, and to adore. Oh, what are we? The Lord save and keep us in all his truth! and may we increase with the increase of God. I thank God for all the kindness I have received from my friends at Thorp-Arch. I should love to see you, and partake of the comfort of your house for a few days, as a resting-place after much labour. I pray that salvation may ever be with you and your partner. Tell Mrs. Burnley, it is faith in God that will lift her up every day; yea, it will elevate her above all anxious care; and yet she will continue in every proper act for you all. The Lord ever be with her, and strengthen her mind in prayer! I hope she frequently pours out her soul in that room which she so kindly prepared for us; and, if so, the Lord will meet her and "supply all her need from the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus." May all the children have much grace! The Lord teach, and save them from all evil!

XXXIX.—TO THE REV. J. ARMITAGE.—*Durham,*
April 20, 1807.

I hope all will do well, and that you will, by some means, in some place, receive the "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." This glory is set before us, and I thirst more than ever for all the salvation which can be received in this world. I perceive all your labour, prayer, faith, and working will be seen in that day, as very little that we have done in order to our entrance into glory. I never till lately had such striking views of the heavenly country. The world and the church are gone, self is gone, when I view the place, the company, the eternity. My soul cries out, oh, make and keep me ready! The Bible becomes more than ever my delight, and I am ready to say, "I know nothing; I am nothing." Oh, how I sink, yea lie, before the Lord! Everything that I say or do, preaching, praying, &c. &c., seems to me to be nothing, compared with what it should be. Here I am, here I live, wondering that even the Lord himself should notice me for one moment. I hope you make progress in the heavenly road. God is with you, has shown you many things,

helped you in many, been kind to you respecting your dear partner, in continuing her with you a little longer. Oh, how you should love and serve the Lord your God! You know, nothing can be received but in the same way; you begun well, you continued, you are in His favour. Now, my dear John, bear His likeness. Oh, bear the image of your Lord! Be pure in heart; never proud, never angry, never peevish, never fretful. Let all within be from heaven. God your all. I trust you will never rest without this. I hope in your next you will say, "I gave my all to Him. I pleaded, and would not let him go. He has cleansed my soul. I feel it. All evil is gone. I live in love—all love, nothing but love." Time is short, your work is great; God can do it, and he will do it for you. Fear not. Be holy; have the closest union with your Maker, your Saviour.

XL.—TO MR. SIGSTON.—*Sunderland, April 23, 1807.**

When I received your last I was unable to answer it, and am not yet prepared. A world of confusion! the whole earth trembles. We are all in the dark, and yet the light of God shines upon this little spot, to the astonishment of thousands. I wonder at our continued salvation. Our God yet fighteth for us; and how can we account for it? The Spirit is received in some places, even in its depth; but this is through means. If the ministry is not sound, there is, I perceive, great power with God amongst the people. The preachers sometimes take the praise, and this may create a new establishment; but "God will reward every man according to his works." The mixture, in a general way, I am confident, is increasing. The rich, the mighty, sit upon their seats, and too frequently usurp improper authority, which damps too much the living flame amongst the simple. Young preachers seek to gain the respect of such persons, to their own destruction. How to stop the torrent, is beyond the wisdom of man, and (I am afraid, in the *ordinary way* of working,) the power of God. Will anything do it less than judgment, the fire, the sword, the plague, the army? &c. &c. Will anything do it less than the test—"Live to God, and die for it?" The stir with the Ottoman makes me conjecture, that the time is drawing near. But this is with a few. Lord, what can we

* The letters to Mr. Sigston included in the present collection are extracted from that gentleman's 'Memoir of Mr. Bramwell.' They are not the least valuable, although they contain frequent references to those melancholy forebodings in which the writer indulged on some subjects connected with the ministry and the Wesleyan community.

do? I am confident we can do nothing, only “fear God, and honour the king;” love all the world, and do a little in the way He hath appointed us; “stand still, and see the salvation of God.” I have lately seen what I never saw before, that is, the great darkness and wickedness which are on all the Continent. I am persuaded that the greatest part of the world is now in such a state of superstition, as has never been known—all sects gone, quite gone, from the glory! Excepting England and some other nations, the world called “Christian” is *Devilish*. I want much to hear from Pontavice,* who has now a Protestant church in France; but I cannot write, or receive a letter from him. What do you think? Will America cast us off? Shall we stand alone among the nations? What are your views? I have lately seen much into the Gospel. I am convinced, our glory is little comparatively; especially as it respects the body. We are the temples of the Holy Ghost. I see the necessity of the greatest purity in the outward man. To keep the whole, requires constant prayer, watching, looking always at Christ. I mean that the soul never be diverted from him for one moment; but that I view Him in all my acts, take hold of Him as the instrument by which I do all my work, and feel that nothing is done without Him. To seek men, world, self, praise, is so shocking to my view at present, that I wonder we are not all struck dead when the least of this comes upon us! I know immediately when I grieve the Lord—the Spirit speaks within; and to do wrong in the great light, is the great offence. I long to live as near as ever any did; and yet I feel I have not all that Ann Cutler found. My soul is subject to sloth; and I have work, I assure you, to keep all things going at full speed. But when I do this for one day, I see the ground I have gone over. Oh, how swiftly we may run even in this world. I think I am as strong in body to labour as ever I was; and yet I find my sight fails me fast—a loud knock at my door! I am settling all my little things as much as possible, and long to see the other world. Go on, my dear Sigston, go on! Let all within you praise the Lord, yea, may your whole soul be given up to Him! and may dear Mrs. Sigston live in all the glory of this dispensation! The Lord give you his great blessing, and may all that has ever befallen us, be found the necessary means of brightening our everlasting crown!—In all commentators I am at a loss for the depth of the Spirit. Can you say what man has gone fully into it?

* This gentleman was a French emigrant, with whom Mr. Bramwell had become acquainted at Sheffield: he had, in fact, been a convert under the ministry of the latter.

XLI.—TO THE REV. J. ARMITAGE.—*Durham, Dec. 2, 1807.*

Very little out of the ordinary way has transpired with us since I saw you, excepting the enlargement of our chapel, with others which are building. We have been in a bustle with these, which are not quite finished, but will be in the course of a fortnight; and then great things are expected to take place, as our congregations have been much scattered. I wish everything here may answer our expectations. All the seats are let, and many more than can be had would be taken, though the chapel will be large in the extreme. The preachers are well, and all united; we meet together every Saturday, at one of the houses, and things are quite comfortable. I am certain that there is much more real religion amongst us, than amongst any other sect in England, and yet the preaching of sanctification, and living it, are much upon the decline. How this is to be remedied, I cannot tell. It must end in something bad, if this glory cannot be restored. I mourn, I lament to see it. Oh, Lord, make bare thine arm, and save us. A number of persons in this circuit have clearly received the blessing lately; and numbers more are athirst for it; but to receive it BY FAITH ALONE—this is the difficulty. I mean, we can scarcely persuade them, that God will do it. I hope, my dear brother, your salvation and the full salvation of dear Sarah lie near your heart. I hope you improve time, especially in the morning. Oh, how Satan will tempt you to lie in bed these cold mornings, when you should be at your prayers and in your study every morning at five o'clock, or before. By this practice, what wonders you would do with God, with the word, with your soul, and for your family! Oh, arise, my dear Armitage! You will soon be gone. Salvation is nearer than when we believed. Remember Fletcher, who was changed from a lion to a lamb. God will be with you. Oh, be a wonder in Leeds—a wonder for preaching, yea, for the salvation of men. I pray for you, and plead, that all your tempers, words, and works may from this time be pleasing to God, and that he may say at last concerning you, "WELL DONE." I never felt more of the power of religion. I never lived so near to God. I never was more ashamed than now. What have I done? What have I seen? Nothing, nothing, oh, Lord Jesus! I wonder that I have been suffered to live or to speak. Oh, Lord my God, save me, even to the uttermost. Prayer, never-ceasing prayer, brings the glory; and the more we see of God, the less our selves appear. I do hope

to be with God my Saviour shortly. I never saw glory more desirable. I long to be with the happy spirits above, and to join them in praising God and the Lamb for ever. Beg, my brother, yea, beg of God, that I may live to him. I never was more tempted : Satan roars against me. I cannot please him ; I cannot submit or yield. "The Lord reigneth." Amen.

XLII.—TO THE REV. A. E. FARRAR.—*Ivestone, Dec. 7, 1807.*

I thank you for your letter, and am glad that you are comfortable in your station. God is with you, and he will be with you, if you walk by the same rule, and mind the same things. You have received from the Lord how you ought to preach and walk before the people. To improve all your time, you will find it necessary, after you have done your work, to retire to sleep as soon as possible, and to rise early. Where you cannot have your fire made, have your tinder-box, wrap yourself well up, and you will find abundance of all things needful in the morning. Keep all the fire within. "It is the Unction," said Mr. Fletcher, "that makes the preacher." Live in purity of heart. Be saved from all sin, and declare this at every proper season. Never be too long, even in the best company. You will easily find out the time to leave : in this you will retain your proper dignity and variety. Never speak evil of one place or society in the circuit when at another ; or of one person, to another. In observing this, you will prevent much evil to yourself and your labours. When you preach, do not begin too high ; you may speak with as much force, and with a better cadence in the lower tone. Your voice will increase in strength, if you keep from the rack. Abraham, be a man of God, an useful preacher, bringing many souls to glory : study this, and you will accomplish it. Let your end always be the salvation of men. You can have a book and write all your sermons before you preach them ; but do not write too much, neither determine to be too correct in keeping to your plan. Never be stiff, tiresome. The English cannot bear this. Never be tedious ; yet do not be too short. Let them have all from you, but "much in little." Never say "my hearers," in the pulpit : this would be better from the aged. All your address should be modest and grave, yet sweet and simple. I feel a strong desire that you may ever answer to all I have said of you, that I may never be ashamed of my confident boasting in your behalf.

Do, oh, do take my love, much love to every place, to every society and family in Holderness. The Lord be with them. Oh, how I love them. As to the dear friends, who inquire in Hull, Beverley, &c., I long to see them all; it may be "at the resurrection of the just." I am sometimes afraid lest the work should stop in this circuit—this may be from Satan; for numbers are still saved.

XLIII.—TO MRS. PAWSON.—*Sunderland, January, 1808.*

I am waiting for my change. I can say, I long for it. I have been preaching two funeral sermons this week, for two eminent Christians; and my soul, at the time, received such a view of the glory which they now enjoy, that earth and all things in it, were swallowed up in God. I must say to my dear mother in the Gospel, "I now live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I have been for some months labouring to attain to that point,—for nothing for one moment to divert me from God. The Lord has given me this blessing. I now feel the full effect of that passage, "He dwells in God, and God in him." I live in God. O what views have I in this state! Creation, redemption, full salvation, the state of the world! I grieve, but it is in God. I rejoice, but it is in God. I speak, but I find it is in God. I am tempted much, but unmoved in God. O how I long for all the church to know this great salvation! And yet I can bear with the weak more than ever. I am greatly ashamed; sometimes I blush before the Lord. I can do nothing without him. I find him on my side, and he gives me most striking deliverances. I wonder that God can love me. How is it? But I can adore the Lamb of God. My dear Mrs Pawson, what shall we do to persuade the church into this union? To be cleansed from sin is great indeed; but to receive the inward glory, in its full influence—this is the salvation. The Lord waits to impart everything he has promised; and] would, as a kind father, rather, much rather, that his children had the whole.—I hope you are going on. Fear not; he has saved and protected you, and he will do it to the end. Remember, instead of going from the outward to the inward, we are, as a body, going from the inward to the outward splendour,—which has been too much the case with all churches. The Lord be with you.

XLIV.—TO THE REV. J. DRAKE.—*Sunderland, Feb. 11, 1808.*

I am frequently thinking of you; I want much to know how you are, in body, family, mind, and labours. I hear of good things from some circuits; but am at a loss to know whether the increase of "pure religion and undefiled" be general. Numbers are turning from their outward evils, and uniting with the Methodist societies. I have been waiting for a greater work this year than there was the last. In this circuit there is now a very favorable prospect. All the chapels and preaching-places are crowded. Every means has been used to preserve a strict discipline; and, though it has been hard labour, it has been effected with much patience and love. Two hundred have joined us the last quarter. I have seen, at the least, one hundred find mercy. About seventy soldiers meet in class. The people are most friendly. But the work of sanctification is unknown. However, it will come with power. We are about to establish a band for this purpose; and hope to see numbers receive full salvation. My dear Drake, I have the same view of the work as I always had, and the same feeling of the POWER, with increase. I was never more tempted;—I am followed by Satan continually. The Lord save me for ever! I have lately had some deep views of the glory of our dispensation, and am now striving. I see all must be given up every moment. There must be continual prayer, and patience with all. O may we live in all the salvation! You may depend upon it, my dear brother Drake, that to preach and pray in the Holy Ghost, and to have strong faith in God, is the way to see Satan fall before us. Go on, never give it up; never sink! The Lord will be with you and bless you. I was never less, never weaker; yet God is almighty to save. I have thought much of glory, and of those who are called to enjoy it. I long to be with them. But I wait, I can wait; I can say,—“Willing to stay, willing to go.” Amen.

XLV.—TO THE REV. R. PILTER.—*Sunderland, March 7, 1808.*

It has been much on my mind to write to you. I remember with gratitude the information you gave me respecting my friends in Kent. How you are going on this year I do not know; but I hope the Lord is still with you, and blessing you in all your labours. Our work, as ministers of the Gospel, is of such importance, that I frequently tremble exceedingly before I go

into the pulpit. Yea, I wonder how I ever dared to engage in such a work. Yet when I am labouring to speak a little, I am frequently so much overpowered with the Divine presence, that I would not leave my work for all the world. O how merciful is God our Saviour! He "strengthens our weak hands. He will save us." Go on, my dear brother; preach, pray, purge, and plant. Do all in God, and He will stand by you, and work amongst the people. I hope you see the propriety of the improvement of time. Perhaps "early to bed and early to rise," may be the best. I do not know whether you will need more than six hours. I say "six hours in bed." This has been sufficient for me for many years. If you find that you can do with so little bed, you have time for all things. What is it you cannot receive? What is it you cannot bear? What is it you cannot do? Live, my brother, in entire sanctification. Be cleansed from sin. Live, my brother, in love, yea, in the fulness of God. Live to be a workman. Do all the will of God in the churches. You will go through the circuit, seeking souls. Nothing but souls brought to God will satisfy. You will save yourself and those that hear you. All is well here, through the goodness of God—your relations,—the church. Numbers are turning to God; but, I think, not so many in Sunderland as there were in the last year. Great crowds come to hear. The chapel [Sans street] is now one of the largest. All the seats are let: a pleasing sight! Oh, to be ready! I labour. I strive. I do grow a little. I live in God. He is all. Oh, the union, the heaven! I never saw myself so little; yet I am "kept by his mighty power." Lord, help me and all thy followers to sing thy praises for ever! May I meet you in glory! Amen!

XLVI.—TO THE REV. J. ROBINSON.—*Sunderland,*
April 15, 1808.

I understand that you are quite satisfied you are in your place; I mean as a travelling preacher,—a work which makes me, even to the present time, tremble in the presence of God. I am still persuaded that nothing can support us but that Almighty power which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. Yet it is quite possible for you and me to make this a worldly business, that it may become so formal as to create in us no more concern than any common business in life. Shall the Lord ordain us to this heavenly calling? Shall he empower

us with the spirit of zeal and of power? Shall he send us forth into this labour, to save sinners from everlasting damnation? And shall we, after all, lose the true spirit of our calling? How can we then give in our account? How shall we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Nothing less than the improvement of time, talents, &c. &c. can give us the least plea in that day. Consider this, my dear brother, and strictly examine yourself. Do you rise about four o'clock every morning? In order to this, do you retire to rest as soon as your work and eating are over? Or do you sit and chat with the people? Do you give yourself to reading and prayer? I say GIVE, "*give yourself to these.*" Are you never in company above an hour at once? And, when in company, do you turn all into profit,—into religion? Are you a man of God, in spirit, in word, in deed? Do you feel a clear witness of entire sanctification,—the cleansing blood? And do you declare this and walk in it? I want you also to be a preacher. And, in order to this, would it not be well to read the Scriptures without a comment, to find out the breadth and length, depth, and height, by digging, prayer, and receiving light from God? Whoever depends on comments will be very superficial, and will never speak with proper confidence. You may sometimes examine a comment after your own labour, to see what difference, &c.—but never before it. Write something every day: have a book for the purpose; and never lose one idea, which the Lord in mercy gives you. In preaching, never be tedious; the world never did, and never will bear that which is tedious. Let your introduction be a short opening to your sermon. An introduction is to prepare the people to receive what you have to say. Let your sermon be clear and strong, reaching every heart. "Save thyself and them that hear thee." If you have no end in view but the bringing souls to God,—this will cure almost everything. Strive to bring some home in every sermon. God will be with you, and he will bless you. He will give you the desire of your heart. Be neat and clean in all your clothes; never foppish or fine. Have everything consistent with your Lord Jesus. Set Him before you at all times. Never be ceremonious; yet learn a good address. Be courteous, be kind, never gloomy, never light or trifling. O my brother, live for eternity; the Lord is at hand. Be ready every moment for glory: ever as willing to leave this earth as to go to sleep.

XLVII.—TO MRS. BAISTON.—*Sunderland*, 1808.

I have long had it upon my mind to write to you. This may be because of our former union in Christ Jesus. For I hope this union will continue with us, yea, never be broken. Can we receive a meetness for eternal glory? And can we receive this meetness for glory, whilst on earth, even in such a short time? Can we in a moment secure an everlasting crown? O my sister, who would trifle, who would suffer any object in this world to divert him from the reward—the full reward? I am frequently astonished, that any enlightened person should make provision for the body, in such a way as to hinder in the least measure the glorious recompense. You will view mountains; and, in looking to God, you will reach their tops. But in little things, you will use your own strength, and sink to the bottom. Christ Jesus hath told us, that nothing can be done separately from him; and yet we forget the caution, and lose our way. Every thing requires prayer; and, if we pray in everything, we shall always find cause for thanksgiving to God. Keep your proper look-out, or view. Keep in continued acts of faith. Keep your utmost patience; for in seeing, believing, and being resigned, all your enemies will fall before you. My sister, as it respects our great salvation, we have nothing to do with those who began before us, or with those who came in after us, with counsel from man, or with the experience of others, unless these corroborate the testimony. It is plainly, what GOD says; for all he hath said he will do. Set your foot upon the Rock; fix your eye upon the promise; and, with your hand, lay hold of the purchased blessing. It must come, it must all come. Nothing less than ALL is yours. Nothing does my soul more good than to see my fellow-Christians claiming their own,—that which is with God laid up against their return. When you receive this cup of salvation, the effect will be,—the clamour of self is over,—the slavish fear of being nothing is over,—the soul keeps its place in God; and is ready for all that can come upon it. It bears, it forbears; it thinks no evil; it cannot dwell or live here. Oh, this heaven of God's presence! this opening into glory! this weeping over a lost world! this being willing to lay down your life for the church! "*God is all.*" Oh, my soul, I feel its fire, its burning, as I write. God grant the flame may spread, the glory shine! May the world receive it! Places to me are less than ever. Devoted souls are my delight. To see my friends dwelling in God, and God in them, affords me one of the greatest earthly pleasures. Go on, my dear sister,

go on; the crown is before you. A few more battles, and heaven is won. The Lord Jesus grant that you may never faint! Will you write, and let me know all things concerning yourself, my dear brother Baiston, and friends? I long to meet you all in yonder bright world. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

XLVIII.—TO THE REV. MR. PRESTON.—*Sunderland*, 1808.

Nothing in this world can equal the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially when the love of God becomes the ruling principle of the soul. To struggle with outward sin is hard work. To fight with the risings of evil nature is hard work. But when the soul receives the all-cleansing blood, when the mind enjoys this indwelling God, when He reigns alone,—then we find the great benefit of salvation.—All is quiet, all is calm, you stand unmoved. Water, fire, devils, men, cannot all disturb your rest. Besides, you are prepared for every work,—can preach, pray, &c. &c., and leave all to Him. Some say, “it is good,”—others “middling,”—others “very bad;”—you can still say “glory!” and proceed with your work. Happy man! Happy work! Happy end! I hope you have fallen into no decline, given up no part of your faith or your union with God. Shall such a man flee, and so many souls going to hell? Can you bear to see the world sink lower? It is low enough. We must, by the grace of God, at least have a few, as brands from the fire. If you gain one in a month, see your crown of glory; and if nothing else will stimulate your soul to perpetuate this blessed work, let the place in the city of God ever stir you up to magnify the Lord in your body, whether it be by life or by death. I believe you have not yet received the promise; I mean all the promise. I know that all things are so delightful when we enter the country, that we shall be occupied in gazing on the flowers, instead of pressing into all the glory which you will ever find in the centre,—God. To be swallowed up in Him, is your glory. Do not stay because others do. Give kind words to all, but tarry with none. Every thing you have to do on earth will now be a step to heaven. Business will smile with the presence of God. You will see him in all things, and you cannot do anything without Him. Live, my dear brother, with Abraham in believing, with Elias in prayer, with Daniel in courage, with John in love, with Paul in feeling for the world. Remember “night and day with tears.” In general,

debates are fruitless. If possible, keep from them, though on the purest subjects. Whoever thinks differently from you, be the same kind and affectionate friend to them. Bless them who curse.—The Lord be with you.

XLIX.—TO THE REV. A. E. FARRAR.—*March 24, 1809.*

I thank you for your last letter. At that time you were in health, labouring with all your might to bring sinners to God. I am lately informed, that you cannot continue this great work. I am sorry that your strength is so much decreased; but am very desirous of knowing all the circumstances from yourself. A letter, informing me of your recovery, would be highly satisfactory. However, God, your Heavenly Father, knows how and when to deliver. I am certain he loves you, and will deal with you accordingly. He careth for you, and will pour out his blessing. I am confident you “will not want any manner of thing that is good.” I believe your soul will rise above it all. Now is the time to prove your affection. Now is the time to lay up the weight of glory. If you should preach again, you will have fresh matter. If you should preach no more, you will have your reward. The work of justification is great; yet the entire renewal of the soul in the image of God is much greater. This full salvation will comfort you.—Nothing but patience, saying with your Lord, “I will drink it.” O the rest in God! I congratulate you. This is your glory, “Christ my all!” Give up body and soul. Fear not, Abraham. He will be everything that faith can make him. He will be this to your heart in every state. I could love to see you brave affliction, death, &c. &c. I think I do see you, I hear you saying, “I am more than conqueror!” Amen! The Lord be with you!—I am praying *always*: nothing less will do. May I endure; may I increase; may I abound!

L.—TO THE REV. JAMES EVERETT.—*Liverpool, June 21, 1809.*

I received yours. I am glad, because you continue strong to labour, and God is with you, sending prosperity. Know your chain, and determine to go to its length. But also determine not to *break* it. “He knoweth whereof we are

made," and indeed "we are but dust." Be filled with the Spirit; and yet the Spirit will be subject to reason. Go on, my dear brother. I must decrease, but you will increase. Be a burning light for ever; for, if ever the fire goes out, you will be fit for nothing.

LI.—TO MISS BREW.—*St. Helens, July 5, 1809.*

I rejoice on your account. You are kept by the power of God. It is by faith we stand. I believe you have received the forgiveness of sins. It is an unspeakable blessing to have this, and to *know it*. In this you will not rest; for, in reading the word of God, you will find "great and precious promises." They are all yours, for you are Christ's. Shall anything prevent or hinder you? Can Satan persuade? Has not God performed his word? And will he not forgive you all things? To hunger, to thirst, to pray, to plead, is your act; and this through Divine power. Will not God undertake your cause, and give you full salvation? Fear not. You will find the cleansing blood, you will receive the mind of Christ, and all *through faith*. O for this mighty faith that brings the blessing! When you receive this, you will be less than ever. You will feel your nothingness, but your all from God and in God. The sacrifice being complete, the soul will be completely changed into the image of God. You will then "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things." I want you to be devoted to God. You cannot yet know for what end God hath made you so happy; I say so *happy*,—for what hath the world to equal this? You may now answer the end of your creation, of redemption, of the death of Christ, and the descent of the ever-blessed Spirit! You may now offer up strong cries and tears for your relations. You may now drop a word for the Son of God. You may prevent the everlasting ruin of some. You may increase the glory of numbers. O see your call. It is of great importance. My advice is, that you reject everything at the present that would in the least degree draw you from the love of God. Keep your centre; never be diverted, never wander, mourn if ever you lose sight of Him. Rejoice in a constant view of Him. What shall we be in a short time? I am lost in astonishment. I see the glory beyond all thought;—"we shall see Him as he is." This will consist in our being like Him. This "recompense of reward" is now known to

thousands; and what are all their former sorrows now? What are all their temptations? What is persecution now? O! I am "lost in wonder, love, and praise." My dear Miss Brew, never shrink from the cross, never be ashamed. Proclaim the Lamb of God. Hear Him, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Is it not enough, quite enough, to be with Him, and to behold His glory? Let us be ready to take our flight, be crucified to the world, be dead whilst we live. I should be glad to see you soon, if the Lord will; but His will be done! If you are in your place, God will be with you, and you will see the cloud, and know when to move. Pray, O pray much. Let your heart be given up in this duty. A light shall shine upon your path. Do not live as most persons do; be not *almost*, but *altogether* a Christian.

LII.—TO HIS SISTER, MRS. HARGREAVES.—*Liverpool*, 1809.

We are sorry to find that you are much worse than usual. The mystery will shortly be unveiled, and you will see God. In the mean time it must be the great labour of faith which can support and bear you up in such circumstances; but God is yet able to bring you through. I frequently think that your everlasting crown will shine superior to thousands, who have not so suffered. O that I could in the least relieve you! But what are wishes, or desires, or tears, for one in agony of pain? The Lord Jesus stands before you, and shows himself in blood. Nothing but the viewing of him, can give the least consolation. Salvation is near; though it tarry, wait for it.—God hears your groanings, and will come down and deliver you.

LIII.—TO THE REV. MR. PRESTON.—*Liverpool*, 1809.

In writing to you, I find it on my mind to declare the great love of God our Saviour. Nothing produces such union of souls, such pity for sinners, such warmth of affection towards the church. The love of Christ is my study; but I am frequently at a loss to understand how it is that my love to Him is so little. I am sometimes ready to stumble at myself on this account. "Am I right? Can I be right in this little

love? Could I die for thee?* Could I suffer long, and still *love with a passion like thine?* I am crying to God daily, hourly, constantly, to receive a thousand times more love. I must give myself away; for the sacrifice was consumed. I, too, must be consumed; self must be consumed; all the man must be consumed. And yet I must live." Thus to lose myself in Him, I find is my glory. Then nothing but Christ in thought, word, preaching, praying, &c. &c. All the Son of God! His mind, His way, His work, His manner! To this I am coming, I am near. I am just going into my Lord. Here the noise of self, of the world, and of the devil, is over. All is burning, all is rest, yea, all is calm within: the eye fixed, the soul established, the tongue loosed, and all in the spirit! Here the Lord teaches, the Lord governs, and the Lord continually supplies. This is salvation, and the salvation belonging to all believers. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God. This is for you; and I pray that you may never rest satisfied without it. Amen! The reason why the Methodists, in general, do not live in this salvation is, there is too much sleep, too much meat and drink, too little fasting and self-denial, too much conversation with the world, too much preaching and hearing, and too little self-examination and prayer. A number of Methodists now will be in public the whole of the Sabbath; and if they heard angels all the time, they would be backsliders. It is astonishing how the devil is cheating us, and at the same time filling for a moment our heads, and emptying our hearts. Good God! what shall we do? How shall we return? Is it possible to bring the body back by the same way, or into the same way? I fear not. I sometimes nearly lose my hope. In all churches till the present time, Satan has used outward splendour to darken the inward glory. Is it too late to see, to know, to understand the temptations of the devil? My dear Preston, consider these things. Stand and look around. Do not condemn, but pity. Do not destroy, but heal. Do not drive, but draw. If possible, live in all the union, the power, the salvation.—Watch, keep your body under, mortify, slay, crucify! Be a man of God; never go to bed late; always rise at four if possible, not lying in bed above six hours. Give a good account; stand before the Son of man. O the glory of bringing all things to the judgment-seat! This would cure us of sloth and everything else.

* "Yes, and would. But the love of Christ consisted less in ardour of passion than in strength of principle. It would have carried him without a murmur to the martyr's stake."—Note by Mr. WAWN.

Determine.—Let me hear from you, and of you; yea, let me hear that you live with God, walk with God. Keep from everything wild, everything that goes before the Spirit. Take God with you, but never hang behind. Keep up and abound; “increase with the increase of God.” I have had some blessed showers lately:—numbers saved in the meetings;—distress amongst many in the extreme, I mean in temporal things. What will the end be? The powers of Heaven are shaken.—Christ will come! He will reign triumphant. We may see it when we are in Heaven, if not before.

LIV.—TO HIS DAUGHTER.—*Liverpool, May 2, 1810.*

I now find you much on my mind; and I have a desire to see you. In this I must endeavour to feel the most perfect resignation. In this world we must suffer; and the absence which is necessary for our well-being on earth, is certainly one part of this suffering. You have one who loves you with that regard which is far beyond all my affection; and he will ever watch over you for your salvation. Evil spirits, an evil world, with all around you, will not be able to ensnare, so long as you live in fellowship with your God. Let all things be done with a pure design for his glory. Keep your soul in that sweet calm in Him. Watch to please your Lord in all things. Be Mary, have Mary's heart, receive of Christ's teaching, and increase in all those heavenly tempers every day. I long to see you eminent for holiness, for the Divine life, receiving the image of your God, and speaking for your Heavenly Master in every action. I am persuaded a work is before you; and, if all diligence is given, if every mean is used, if faith is in constant exercise, if hope prevails, if your soul is fixed on Heaven, you will be ready for all the will of God. “One thing is needful,” which is continual prayer. All will fail unless you labour in this way. Let the times be as frequent as possible, and the manner as fervent as possible. Full of expectation, look for the promise, and believe for the blessing. Be mighty in this duty. You will be strongly tempted to neglect prayer. Satan can continue his authority with all persons who do not give themselves to prayer.—Fear not, Ann! Your Lord hath bought all the glory; and I hope you will claim your part in the first resurrection. O that you may ever be an ornament to the Gospel of God.

LV*.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Liverpool*, 1810.

My children lay near my heart. My daily prayer to God is, that they may all serve the God of Daniel, and receive from their heavenly Father the same protection and salvation. I hope you love the Bible. You will find in it (what many great men have found) the highest excellencies: even for language, it exceeds all other books. The study of this volume will become delightful to you: your mind will thereby be moulded into all goodness. I was thinking of you yesterday, for you are much upon my mind. Do you improve your time, for on this very much will depend? Your love to your parents, your wish for your own profit, and your hope of usefulness in the world, will doubtless stimulate you to all diligence. Above all, look well into the everlasting state. See what you have to meet, and consider how you ought to stand before the Judge. Your God will undertake your cause here. Only never grieve him; let your life be one continued act of obedience. Salvation will be your portion, and I shall be with you in glory for ever!

LVI.—TO MR. BURROWS.—*Sheffield*, 1810.

I never think of you but with joy; I know that your views and practice in the great cause may bring upon you some suffering. Yet what is that, if, at the same time, you keep a good conscience towards God and man? Your salvation will still increase, and your love abound; all your little difficulties will produce, under the influence of your Lord, a blessed harvest of grace. Everything that takes place in the church, or in the world, sends us to prayer, drives us into the HOUSE—I mean, unto God our Saviour. You know what it is to live in that holy place. Entire sanctification is much upon the decline amongst us as a body. Will the general glory ever be restored? Perhaps never. What then is our business? To make the sacrifice of body and soul to God every day, to live in all his salvation, and to be ready to meet the world, judgment, and our God. May this be our state of soul—to live beyond all fear, all worldly joy or worldly sorrow; for all to be of God—all we feel, say, or do. I never was so much within the court as at present. Continual prayer, redeeming the time, little sleep, and much labour, bring continual rest. To be cleansed from sin is much; but God, in

great mercy, is filling my soul with love. I could sometimes shout, "GOD IS LOVE." Satan strives every day; my life is more than ever a conflict and a regular fight. Happy is it for me that God is ALMIGHTY, or I should be ruined. My dear brother, live these few days of your life, oh, live for glory! A little while, and HE will come. I should love to be with you in your house for a week; but *that*, I suppose, is your providential place, and *this* is mine. Pray, pray, pray, more than ever.

LVII.—TO HIS DAUGHTER.—*Sheffield, March, 1811.*

You are now entered upon another station in life. I suppose you imagined your former state called you to make some APPEARANCE, which was connected with your standing.—I therefore, as your most affectionate father, wish you, by every means, to consider how you may in the greatest degree ornament your profession. You are the daughter of a Methodist preacher: you see my station. You are a child of God, a follower of your Saviour. You will be noticed by all; all will watch, and you should expect it. In the first place, let your manners be open, free, kind to all; yet modest, serious, and without the least gloom. Let your clothes be quite plain—bonnet, gown, shoes—everything you have. But let them be always clean and good. Dress is not religion; plainness is becoming. A well-dressed Quaker appears to me to be nearly a pattern. I wish you to be such, and not to hesitate for one moment; but, without saying a word to any one, determine in God to do so. I believe you will, and I shall rejoice. The greater the cross, the greater the glory. Again, I wish you to improve your mind in proper books; to study the Scriptures every day; and never to be much in company, except when you read to others, or are at some proper work. Let your times be fixed for private prayer—say twice in the forenoon, and twice in the afternoon. Always see your next blessing, by reading the word; and gain some ground every day. At certain times visit the sick, and pray with them. Break through in this, and you will find great consolation; you will feel for them. I pray for you every day, that you may possess these virtues, and be all I desire. May your Heavenly Father give you every blessing.

LVIII.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Sheffield, May 13, 1811.*

Your last letter has greatly endeared you to me; for I must love you still more, from the slightest confidence that you will love God. I esteem the things of time as nothing, when compared with everlasting glory; and wonder at man, poor man! who is but the creature of a moment, and yet so bent on ruin! so difficult to be persuaded! so hard to be moved to seek for salvation! Happy! truly happy are they who live to Him who died for them! This disturbs no study, no learning, no proper labour; on the contrary, it prepares the mind for everything in life or in death.—I am most truly waiting for my change. The anticipation of that glory which is to be revealed, ravishes my soul; and from the persuasion that I shall have you with me, I am eaten up with joy.—I think I perceive how you are hindered; you expect the end without the means. When I saw my need of Christ, I believed, as you do, that I must be saved, and that none but God could save me. But I found I possessed a degree of power to ask and to pray; and I exercised that power—praying for salvation repeatedly during the day. Though I sometimes felt but little, yet I continued to beg according to the Scriptures, “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.” The Lord drew my mind to converse with his people; to ask them to pray for, and to reprove me; to correct and to search me. This I found to be of great service; and I still see that this is the way of God with man. Use all the means of grace, for they can do no harm; but under God will produce much effect. Feel for the church; and you will soon be drawn to act in some little way for the glory of HIM who gave Himself for you. If man be alive to temporal things, how much more should he be alive to the work of his salvation! “To strive” is the commandment.

LIX.—TO HIS SON WILLIAM.—*Sheffield, 1812.*

To hear of you in any way gives great relief to my mind: still more, to find you employed in a proper manner as respects this world, and also that glory which is to come. All temporal things are designed to prop up this mortal body, in order that the spirit may be changed, and fitted for a state of everlasting enjoyment. Keep this in view in all your labours. God will bless your proceedings; He will give counsel; He

will guide you into all good things.—I shall be glad if you will send me an account of your real state of mind as it respects the salvation of God; because this, after all, is the business of life—we spend a moment to secure an everlasting crown. I find rich and poor all in pieces when they are sick, if they have made no preparation for a happy death. I hope you see this to be “the conclusion of the whole matter—to fear God and keep his commandments; this is, indeed, the whole duty of man. God will bring every work into judgment.”—Pray to God in the fervour of your mind. Ask Him, as you would ask me—He will answer in your salvation. *We* pray for you every day, and I hope to continue this till I receive the crown which can never fade. I mean to have you all with us in glory.

[The next letter is one of the most touching and eloquent of Mr. Bramwell's epistles.]

LX*.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Sheffield*, 1812.

From the utmost regard for your welfare in this world as in that which is to come, I sit down to write to you on a subject which I hope will not be unpleasant to you—I mean the fellowship of the people of God. And first, from the order of God in all existences:—the angels in Heaven form the most striking instance of fellowship in nature, in practice, and in happiness. This is proved from the New Testament. The saints in glory form a peculiar union. They are all like their Lord, and see Him as He is. There is a communion of the blessed in this world, in order to that unity which shall take place in glory: truly, our fellowship is with one another—the same in nature, conversation, and practice. This is the commandment of God—the promise of God; and has been the practice of His people in all ages. It is for our good: the prayers, the experience, the union itself tends to this. It is for the good of others: we may employ all the talents the Lord has given us for the profit of many. It is for the glory of God: “herein is my father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” It is a preparation for the world to come: not having then to learn, but having already learned the fellowship of the Spirit; and as respects your own situation and profession, it will bring great good to your cause and interest. If, therefore, good for angels—for the spirits of the just in Heaven—for God's people on earth—if good for your own soul, and

for the souls of others—if truly honorable to your profession, and if our lives are so short—a breath, a vapour, a shadow—should not every sensible and enlightened man fully enter into this fellowship? Do you say it is a cross? Was it not a cross for Christ to bleed for you—and shall *we* hesitate to take up the cross also? Does not the cross bring the crown? And will not *you* be crowned with glory? Your father has desired it—prayed for it—expected it! He must ever drop tears till it is accomplished. No man can be, or ever was made a Christian by force; but I am commanded to “compel them to come in.” I am, therefore, acting in character. To see you united to God, to Christ, and His people, will be my glory. How do I know but that *you* may proclaim your Saviour’s love to man—bring hundreds, yea, thousands, to Heaven? Were you to gain a thousand [law-]suits on earth, one soul brought to God would be more than all. To see you an ambassador for Christ—I should die in peace! Dear John! bear with me—my heart is full—my soul overpowered. “I live,” if you be a man of God.—After all my research, I find no people so much devoted to God as the Methodists in general; and though every one is not right, this seems to be our place. I want you fully and heartily to join them. I shall soon put off this tabernacle. I shall soon leave you. Receive this counsel from your most affectionate father, and write me all your heart.

LXI*.—TO THE SAME.—*Sheffield*, 1812.

All is well. I bless God, our heavenly Father, for all his mercies. Oh, to live to Him who laid down His life for us—to be ready for everlasting glory—this is my daily strife! I, by faith, see the heavens opened. I wait for my change. I long to be in glory. Yet to abide a little while may be needful for you. Do not, then, longer keep my mind on the rack of suspense respecting church fellowship; but comfort me by saying that you have given your whole heart to it, and have become one of the number of Christ’s disciples—a lamb of the flock, waiting to receive the least nutriment, and desiring the salvation of men before all the world. Give me, my dear John, this witness in your next. God will bless you in your obedience. To pray to Him—to be permitted to do so—I consider the greatest privilege in this world. “Ask what you will, and it shall be done.”

LXII*.—TO A YOUNG FRIEND.—*Birstal*, 1812.

You will see a great difference in men's manners and infirmities; yet such a difference may not affect the purity of the heart. I do not mean that you should ever countenance sin, or anything which is a breach of God's law; but I am certain, by my own experience, that a knowledge of self removes whatever is of a censorious nature, and inspires the mind with tenderness towards all.—Nothing astonishes me more than to find persons complaining about their dislike to *places*. This to me is quite childish. Your place is wherever there is an opening of Providence. Sensible men who want to act their part in this world, and to prepare for that which is to come, never look at countries, cities, or places at all. I wonder at *you*.†—You do not say whether you attend class? If not, it is my earnest, perhaps my last advice to you on the subject; do it immediately, with all seriousness and respect. God will hear,—if you never neglect this duty.

LXIII*.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Birstal*, 1812.

The Almighty can do with these poor bodies whatever seems good to his infinite wisdom—and who can say to Him “what doest thou?” His government of the world is right. In all things, he seeks the everlasting happiness of men. As respects

† Doubtful philosophy. If indeed the place be the one appointed by Providence, and all others are actually forbidden, then complaint would undoubtedly be improper. But this is the very problem to be solved in such a difficulty. Is a given locality the *only one* of ten thousand where the individual is permitted to dwell? To say that there is an opening of Providence there, is inconclusive: there might be openings of Providence elsewhere—and perhaps better ones too. A man is not to consider every ‘opening’ as the only opening, or the first as necessarily the best. A woman might as well infer that the first offer of marriage she received was an opening of Providence by which she was imperatively bound. Of course, where there is any compulsion—any constraint which it is not lawful for a man to resist—the case is altered, and the Christian who believes that the Almighty has so ordered his lot, ought to submit without a murmur. Then he must train himself to think, with Shakespeare's John of Gaunt, that

“All places which the eye of heaven visits,
Are to the wise man ports and happy havens.”

But for a person labouring under no such compulsion, and actuated by no such conviction, to tether himself to a spot he may rationally dislike, may be as foolish as for a man to lie groaning in a dungeon with cobweb doors, or guarded only by a *chevaux-de-frise* of bull-rushes. Mr. Branwell had himself, in youth, when he fled from Liverpool, practically refuted the principle which in maturer life he thus asserted; and it is not a little singular that he did so in one of the very cases to which it really *is* applicable; namely, in matters of a purely subjective character, which by their very nature may be perfectly independent of locality. The relations between the soul and its Creator may be wrought out in any place: the relations between an individual and this world may be modified in a thousand ways by mere position. Religion is not a geographical question; but it is otherwise with a man's fortune, friends, comforts, and other social adjuncts. A mistake of twenty miles has often made all the difference (presumptively) between worldly success and worldly disappointment.

the future, there is a kind Providence watching over you. Fear not! Live to him with all your heart, and I know he will provide for you. He is our counsellor in all things. May we do his will in our generation, and reap a harvest of eternal glory! Ever depend upon the Lord, who alone can make you happy and prosperous. He only knows our ways. I look to him every day for direction both concerning you and the other children. I shall lay in a stock of strong petitions, which I trust our heavenly Father will answer in his own way and time. I assure you there is everything in reserve for those who fear him.

LXIV.—TO HIS DAUGHTER.—*Sheffield, June 3, 1812.*

I hope the family and yourself continue in all proper exercises for the benefit of body and mind, because time appears to me exceedingly short. Our removals [from circuit to circuit] excite in me some keen feelings for children, relations, and particular friends. It matters not in what place upon this earth we stand. The Lord is always in every place, waiting to comfort his people, and to make his disciples holy and happy in himself. He wills that we should, as soon as possible, learn that lesson,—to live independent [of earthly things], to dwell in God, and God in us; and by this union, to complete our joy in this world, and to raise us to glory everlasting. The company of angels, in our state of probation, would not alone be sufficient; much less the company of the nearest friends, without having Christ Jesus as our constant companion. To resolve upon private as well as public devotion, must be the conduct of God's children; and, by close examination of the influence of the Spirit, you will soon find the possibility of coming to understand, in all friendly intercourse, when the call is to private meditation and prayer. You know, my dear Ann, what I want concerning this,—that you should answer the end of creation, redemption, the call of the Spirit, and the means of grace—and this by a life of devotion, giving up yourself to striving, to agony, to that labour in Christ Jesus which will produce the image of God, the perfect love, the perfect separation from all things which are not in union with your Redeemer.—To be singular, will be at the first your fear; but look at your Lord, read his practice frequently in the New Testament, and consider how singular he was, and without the least fear of a frowning world. “What

is my duty?"—this is the point, without the least regard to consequences. For this reason retire from every company, however friendly, a number of times in the day. Mind not what looks or words you receive; stay in no place where you cannot do this. Go to no parties, without first knowing the persons, and what is likely to take place. Claim your liberty, by never consenting contrary to sound judgment. Let nothing hinder the full salvation. Read what I have been preaching from several times lately, Phil. iii, 10, 11, 12. Look well into it, and make every purpose or promise your own. You are never in greater danger than when there is the form without the power; "from such turn away."—Make great improvement in the divine life. Everything in the house, I hope, will forward the work of your salvation. You will, most likely, have shortly to enter into public life. Take care to lay up a stock, and let nothing be wasted.—Give a good account to me and to God. We shall have to stand together in judgment. I shall be closely examined as to my conduct towards you, and you on the ground of receiving instruction. It is a day at which I often look. O the change of views by all the world! the torment, the glory! Stand by me here, and stand with me then and for ever! Have all things ready: receive every purchased blessing. "Pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." The Lord write the above upon your heart, and bless you in all things. Live, O live, till I meet you above!

LXV.—TO THOMAS JERRAM, ESQ.—*August, 1813.*

I wonder at the ways of God! I am certain He can do nothing but in infinite wisdom. Yet He is past finding out. The Lord provided you with a helpmate; He gave her for a season, and then took her to himself. He most assuredly provided you with another; but only suffered her to remain for a season. They are now before the throne.—O happy souls!—where sorrows are all ended. We are left to mourn in the world of sorrow a little while, until he comes for us. But we shall soon share the "eternal weight of glory." How necessary then to be ready! I was this morning making the inquiry, "Am I ready? Am I ready to leave the world this moment? Am I ready, as an individual, as a preacher, as a husband, as a parent? Do I do all I can every day, in all respects? O my soul! how is it? I may live much nearer; I may enjoy much more; I may have the fulness of God!"

I immediately began to plead for such fulness of God, and will never rest without it. I am certain all the glory belongs to them who believe. I hope we shall fully believe, and fully receive the grace of God. My dear Jerram, I feel for you; I would share in your bereavement. I thought when I heard—"How should I love to live with him a few weeks, to sympathise, to pray, and to sink into the will of God together!" I cannot tell how you will endure the absence; but I know, God will help you in such a manner as shall be for his glory. He will give counsel; he will give comfort; yea, "he will be with you, he will never forsake you." I would advise you to labour, to make the sacrifice to God; labour to commit the whole to him, though in agony. In this you will find consolation, because the will of God will be yours, his act will become yours; you will unite, and your language will be, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! Though he slay me, I will trust in him!"

LXVI.—TO THE REV. WILLIAM STONES.—*Birstal*, 1813.

I waited for a letter from you, and received it at length with much pleasure. I am more than ever convinced of the great advantage we receive from entire sanctification. It preserves the soul in rest, in the midst of all the storms of life. It gives such satisfaction in every station; so much approves of the order of God; has such a proper look-out for his glory; produces a full deliverance from self, and such a strong desire for the good of our neighbour in every way! The world is gone; we live above it; we "dwell in God, and God in us." We can speak when we will, and be silent at our pleasure. Such a victory is gained, such salvation is accomplished! We are nothing, and feel it; and we can do nothing without God; hence we give him all the praise of every good thought and action. "Keep yourself in the love of God." I have known several who have received it [this love], and some who have lost it. We need not lose it. We may stand, for God is able to keep us for ever. Live in it, talk about it, preach it, and enforce it with all patience, with all kindness;—and if you do this, hell, the world, and numbers * * * * will in some artful way seek to hinder your success. But what are you to do in your station? "Pray without ceasing." Be led "like a lamb to the slaughter; be dumb, not opening your mouth." At the same time, never be moved, never give way in the least. I have known several who were beaten from their practice. What did the late * * *

say to me on this subject? He was handled in a strange manner, and by those who should have lifted up his hands. But there is a day of judgment! If there should be anything extravagant in your manner, always be willing to acknowledge it; but take care that you are not unawares drawn from the LIFE, and sink into the common mass of DEATH. There never was a time when we preachers had greater need to tremble. And Satan's method now is, to keep us in the dark. Labour to show yourself approved as a preacher. I would toil sometimes night and day to have good sermons. But take care that your end in all your reading and study be, to SAVE SOULS. Keep this ONE END in view. There is too much labour now TO BE POPULAR. It was said of one man * * * that "he laboured for an hour to make the preachers and the people think that he knew something." O poor labour! Are not numbers now thus labouring? I see them, and I see they do nothing. How shall such give an account to God? A man goes into a circuit with this in view, "I am determined I will make this circuit know I am somebody!" My brother Stones, the salvation of souls, and, if possible, a soul brought to God in every day's labour, is of greater consequence than all this.

LXVII.—TO MR. THOMAS CROWTHER.—*Chelsea*, 1814.

I suppose you will by this time be returned from Scarbro'. I hope you have kept yourself in prayer, and in the love of God. Many lose ground at the watering-places; and one cause may be, that some go without reason, or have no proper argument for their being there. God will keep us in his own way. Nothing can harm us if we be true followers of Him. Oh, that we may increase with the increase of God! I had a sore conflict respecting my appointment; but in my first meeting, the Lord poured out his Spirit. One man was so filled that he praised God aloud. I perceived at that time and since, that my coming here is of God. I have had several extraordinary seasons, and have been generally received. A number have been justified, and some awakened. I have been in all the chapels, and given many tickets. But we want METHODISM, DISCIPLINE, RELIGION. The Lord, the Lord God of Israel help and bless us in all we have to do! I am weaker than ever, and nothing less than his Almighty power can support me in this place. I have found a number of [spiritual] children from different places, who now reside here;

several of them I had not before known. This gives me joy. What shall we meet in the great day of God?—Oh, what I feel, when I consider the state of London! Ten hundred thousand people! Thirty thousand prostitutes! But so few of God-fearing persons! I often think of what the disciples said to our Lord: “Behold, what manner of stones, and what buildings are here! yet all shall be thrown down!” The thought of such numbers in the way to destruction, is nearly more than I can bear. Yet, with God, it is possible to bear me up. Pour out thy Spirit, oh, Almighty God! Send us a flood from thy throne, and send it soon! Amen and Amen!

LXVIII.—TO MR. B. WILKINSON.—*Chelsea, Sept. 22, 1814.*

You may have thought hardly about my not coming to Sheffield, but I hope you have considered my situation. I do assure you, I had as much as I could bear, and was obliged to get away as quickly as possible, to preserve myself from over much sorrow. My feelings are such that I cannot help it. I wonder at my coming here, and for two or three weeks I experienced such agony of mind on account of it, as I cannot express. Yet I durst not object, because I thought that I should never have been proposed, if the Lord's hand had not been seen in it. I am praying without ceasing, and am now fully convinced that I am in my place. God is with me indeed. Oh, what shall I say? I must spend my short day to his glory. I never was more tempted. It is suggested to me every time I go out, that it must be my last sermon, and that I must relinquish preaching, and settle somewhere. Oh, the violence of hell against me! Perhaps the Lord will show mercy to me, and not lay me aside. “Father, thy will be done.” May I drink the cup of trembling, until I see Thy glory.

LXIX.—TO THE REV. W. STONES.—*London, Jan. 9, 1815.*

I should have written to you long ago; I have been prevented only by another severe attack of the rheumatism. I am now recovering, but the disorder has not yet left my right hand, &c., so that it is with great difficulty I am now able to write. When I came to London, it was in an agony of prayer. I had power with God, and found universal reception. Effects

were produced in every place, and in two love-feasts we had a shower. Numbers were set at liberty. I never had greater life and liberty in preaching. Preachers are all in love and peace. A missionary, one who has been fifteen years abroad, supplied my place in my affliction. I have reason to believe I shall be in my work [again] in a few days. The will of God be done! Amen! I was not able to be at our quarterly meeting, but am told—not certain whether my information may be correct—three hundred new members have been added this quarter. I wonder at the mercy of God.—Though I have been in the furnace, yet I assure you I have had such views of the glory of heaven, and the torments of the damned, that, if I have strength, I shall pour out such blessings and curses as I have never done before. O that my God may be with me! I thank God that you find yourself in your place, and that the work of God is seen amongst you. Never lose your edge!—Never rest till you can say, “Thy blood cleanseth from all sin.” O to feel it, and then to preach it!—God will be with you! Invitations are now proceeding from several towns in France: the Committee are sending preachers.—There was never known a greater opening.

LXX.—TO MR. TURNELL.—1815.

I still find a strong inducement to continue our correspondence; and this, I trust, in the name of the Lord Jesus. The frequent changes, and many deaths of our dear friends, ever call upon me to use the utmost diligence to grow in grace, to be ready, fully ready to meet God. I frequently long for his coming. I wait to see Him as He is—to behold his glory, to see the company, and especially the number I have known, and who are now with Him. What is all the world, or worlds on worlds, to compare with this? What is labour? What is suffering? What are fire and water, supposing we are called to pass through them, if God is with us? To see the Lamb and possess everlasting life, overbalance every thing else!—My wife is much better, but not well. She may still increase in strength.—We have seen a blessed work of God, but seem rather at a stand again. Yet it may break out with greater power, and I hope it will.—The glory which has been revealed in different parts of this kingdom, should make us all rejoice. “The Lord ride on, till all be subdued!” You will find our state of finance truly deplorable. O that the time may come when no circuit shall have more preachers than it will

maintain! I shall then leave you in peace.—How are you in your own mind? Do you keep clear in entire sanctification? Do you grow? Do you pray still more and more, and with greater pleading? Are you all alive, nothing quenching, the heart all love?

LXXI.—TO MR. THOMAS CROWTHER.—*Chelsea,*
April 11, 1815.

I have found it on my mind to write to you an account of my present state. I am able to go through all my work, and have been so for nearly three months.—I never found greater power in preaching, and I see blessed effects under almost every sermon. I never lived in so near an union with God as at the present. I seek to be ready every moment. The views respecting God and everlasting life, given me in my affliction, were extraordinary. To retain a constant sense of the presence of God, is our glory in this world. It is to live in Him, and always to feel it. This great salvation—salvation from all sin—salvation into all the gospel glory—to be changed into the same image—I am lost in wonder, love, and praise! Oh, may we drink still deeper into these wells of salvation! You know how;—prayer, constant, private prayer. I have lately been roused from my bed in the night, to pour out my soul to God. I feel I never pray too much. It is my life, it is my all. We have had great disturbance in London; but you would read of it. I was sorry to find, by the reports from our missionaries in France, that the priests were authorised or suffered to select the Bibles which the French took with them, and to burn them; and that a great number sent to Spain, were seized and sent back. Since that, you find an astonishing change in France. How wonderful that Bonaparte is permitted to return to his place! Great events again! I pray most earnestly to God to prevent, if it please Him, the great shedding of blood. With God this is possible. Some of the most pious of our society, some officers, and others, are called out again. The bustle is very great as a preparation for war. All hands are at work. I was preparing to go to Dunkirk, and this as privately as possible; for we had a congregation there. But this is over for the present. I am persuaded before much can be done on the continent, the whole of the superstitious machine must be broken in pieces; and by what means the Lord knoweth. Hasten thy coming, oh, Lord!

LXXII.—TO MR. SIGSTON.—*Chelsea, May, 25, 1815.*

Notwithstanding my long silence, I have had you and your family upon my heart every day. I pray for you continually, that you may experience all the salvation from sin, live in perfect love, do all the will of God in this world, and that your teaching may, as it has done, answer two blessed ends; that is, produce the wisdom of man, and the power of God, amongst your pupils. Your plan of proceeding, in this respect, will discover the fruit of your labours, in time and eternity. Oh, how desirable to lay up a store in every way, to be ready for all the glory, to live in the fulness of God, to walk with him,—feeling the closest union, the testimony that you please Him! Pray that your preaching may be effectual; have always one end in view—SOULS, SOULS—the salvation of your hearers! Amen, Lord Jesus! You know I have been about three months in the furnace. The mystery of God! “I know not now!” I cannot find it out, but I know He was with me. The glory I experienced was beyond all I can now relate. I was filled with mercy. I could have shouted “MERCY” continually. Yet I never had so clear a view of the torments of the damned. It was shown me most clearly that the terrors of the law of the Lord are not attended to in our preaching so much as is necessary; and you may depend upon it, this is one cause of our leanness. The world must be made sick; men must feel their want of Christ. Oh, what a view of this when in my illness! It was also made more plain to me, that a full salvation through Christ is ever near to those who hunger. “His blood can cleanse;” this is the song in heaven. Since my sickness, I have had uncommon enlargement in preaching, and never saw greater effects. We might expect thousands to be united to us, and yet we have very few comparatively. There is a great stagnation of trade,—almost all persons in London upon the rack. I do think this proves a great hinderance to the word. The Spirit is quenched, and there is little or no prayer among those who get touched. Yet I have seen some brought into liberty every week. In this, my hands are borne up. I give Him, the everlasting God, all the glory.—I remain weak in my ankles and feet, but am able to go through all my preaching and walking. I am not certain what I shall do at the Conference. I shall see my way. The faculty tell me London will not do for me in the winter.—Thou, oh, my God, wilt be my guide even unto death!

LXXIII.—TO MRS. HARGREAVES, SEN.—*Westgate Hill,*
July 27, 1815.

I reached Westgate Hill on Tuesday, and was disappointed in not finding you at home. Yet I hope your journey will be good for the body and mind. This will certainly be the case, as it respects the soul, if you continue in prayer and thanksgiving. To praise God for all events gives liberty. It brings with it great consolation, increases the heavenly union, and strengthens our affection towards the Saviour. For if there be the least dissatisfaction with His government, if the least opposition to His will, the soul is disturbed, and some little breach of the heavenly fellowship ensues. When "Thy will be done," comes from the heart, it brings glory with increase. This is to live in God; he then lives in us. In this our love is made perfect: then we can with all boldness look at the Day of Judgment!—I have for some time found myself taken up into God, and all things on earth drawn with me into himself. This is done by acts of faith. It is by these means I see and embrace Him, and am taken up by him. "My life is hid with Christ in God." I never felt so dependent. I can do nothing without him; and if at any time I feel on reflection that I have acted separately from this close union, I am ashamed, I grieve, and mourn. I dread making the least attempt, if he is not fully with me. Sometimes I have striking views of God, his Being and works. Sometimes I enter within the city, and live for some moments in a blessed fellowship with the glorified. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Faith makes God and glory that to me which is promised. I strive for more; and without daily pleading, I should sink and die. Prayer is more than ever necessary: here I live, and only in this. My dear sister, if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together. Oh, the hope of everlasting life! let everything be done, every day, with an eye to this. Be all light, love, patience, and hope. You will be lifted up: fear not. To be cleansed—to be filled with him, who is all light, all glory—to be changed into him with increasing glory—this is our privilege! Then we rise. We shall reign, we shall be for ever with the Lord. Go on: make some progress daily. God will fulfil all his promises,—they are "YEA AND AMEN in Christ Jesus."

LXXIV.—TO MR. JOHNSON.—*Newcastle, Oct. 26, 1815.*

It has been much upon my mind to give your family some account of our state, as I know that your good wishes for our welfare will lead you all to unite in our sorrows and our joys. It is but a little time since I received my wife at Newcastle. She was somewhat recovered when she came, but has had a severe relapse, and was brought again into an extremely weak state. Within these few days, she has had a little more strength; and may yet, through the blessing of God, be restored to her former state of health. But this is a doubtful case: "Father! thy will be done!" We shall live together in eternal glory. I have continued in good health—only that in my right hand there remain some relics of the rheumatism. I am strong to labour, and find the blessing of God upon my little work. I am, I do assure you, waiting every day for my change; and I see the heavenly throng also waiting for me. I long more than ever to be there,

"Where we shall see His face,
And never, never sin."

The Lord poured out his blessing in our first love-meeting. Six or seven entered into liberty. I received this from my heavenly Father as a token for good. In our second love-feast, none but the society were admitted. It was quite crowded, although held a few miles from Newcastle. At the beginning, all were quiet, and continued in suspense for about an hour. But, in an agony of prayer, suddenly the power of God came upon us all. Conviction was general; there were cries for mercy in every direction. I never was able to preserve greater order, and yet not fewer than thirty persons were set at liberty. This work continued about two hours, and I never witnessed greater glory.

LXXV.—TO MR. PEARSON.—*Newcastle, 1815.*

I have just been at Shields, and saw a shaking through the chapel. I was much struck in visiting a class-leader there: he is in great affliction, but getting better. He said to me, that four days ago, he was in heaven. I suppose it might be a dream. I asked him why he did not stay there? He replied, he was told that he was unfit for that holy place, and must come back to earth to be made fit. He is now in an agony for a clean heart, that he may be fit to remain in heaven

when he has the felicity of entering within the gates into the celestial city. We had a number saved on Sunday in the love-feast. We expect great things. The Lord pour out his Spirit upon us all, and "cleanse and keep us clean!" I never in all my life had such a constant view of eternity; and, three weeks ago, I received a deeper baptism than I ever received before. I wait for the Lord with longing. Pray, oh, pray! It is worth so much! What is so beneficial as a whole night spent in prayer? "Pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

LXXVI.—TO THE REV. W. STONES.—*Newcastle,*
Nov. 10, 1815.

I thank you for your letter; God is with you and will be with you. You are so much assured of the truth, and the power, and the work of God, that if the angels cried out "WILD FIRE," it would have no effect upon you. You would, without saying one word to your adversary, proceed—just as your Lord had done before you. "If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." I say to you in confidence, neither St. Domingo nor Senegal will do for you; you would soon be melancholy. It must be others, if any; but you must stay with us, to keep, if possible, a little spark alive, for entire sanctification is nearly extinguished. I intend to fight as long as I can breathe. At our first meeting here, six or seven found peace with God. In our second love-feast, a crowd—all was suspense for an hour: I was in a secret agony; all at once the power of God went through the whole, and there was general distress. In about an hour thirty persons were delivered, and there was such an effusion of glory for about two hours, as I have seldom seen; gusts of praise ascended to the throne of God. I cannot forget what my soul felt at that meeting. Many have since been saved. In Newcastle we are yet waiting for his coming. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

[The following letter was written to the Rev. Thomas Walker, then of North Shields, under circumstances which that gentleman thus describes: "Soon after my conversion, while reading a treatise on experimental religion, a flood of light burst on my mind, discovering my great non-conformity to

the Divine image, on which, for want of better illumination, I at once concluded that my conversion was but supposed. From this period, a scene of suffering took place, too great to be described. Concluding that I had deceived myself, and fearing I should never obtain the Divine mercy, I knew not what to do. In this horrible night of temptation I wrote to Mr. Bramwell, nothing doubting but that if any human being could set me right, he could. His answer to me threw all the light on my circumstances they seemed to require. I saw at once how my great enemy had foiled me; but the merciful God soon shone on my mind again, and gave me confidence in him as the God of my salvation. This epistle was indeed to me as a light shining in a dark place.”]

LXXVII*.—TO THE REV. THOMAS WALKER.—*Newcastle, 1815.*

I am glad to find that you have submitted to the Divine teaching. God has in rich mercy followed you, and brought you to seek the salvation. From what you have written respecting your state, I am led to argue that you have received the pardon of your sins—you continued truly happy for a season—you believed in the Lord—you were preserved in fellowship with God; but in reading the treatise you mention, you saw some impurity, and immediately concluded that all was wrong; this prevented your faith, and in consequence your mind was brought into distress. I do think you have been overcome of Satan, and cast away your confidence when you ought not. I wish you had read Mr. Wesley’s sermon, called “Sin in believers.” I think in the reading of this sermon you would have seen, that when justified, we are not wholly sanctified; and would have continued in your confidence as to justification, but stimulated to cry for full salvation. I think I have known numbers who have been justified, and, for want of information, have cast away the blessing when inward evil appeared. What you have to do is to bring your all to Christ, and strive to increase in faith: in such acts of faith your mind will receive a sweet calm, peace with God, and a degree of love; but take care in future that you hold fast your confidence, though evil be not all destroyed. Seek patiently, but earnestly. Through faith and patience you will inherit the promises. Labour to improve time—rise early, and read the Scriptures. Use much prayer in private, and perhaps the morning will be the best time. Be clean—be holy, in all your deportment before God. Consider He is always seeing you. May the Lord ever bless you! To hear from you will give me great pleasure.

LXXVIII*.—TO MR. JOSEPH HARGREAVES.—*Newcastle,*
1815.

Grace—mercy—and peace be multiplied!—God, the everlasting God, is unchangeable: he never fails those who put their trust in him.—I have always found Him according to His word—whether to justify or sanctify—to heal the backsliding, or restore comfort to the soul. I am more than ever astonished that we do not live in a much nearer union; that it is not our constant agony to enter into all the salvation; that we do not weep more over ourselves, and over our families and neighbours. I wonder at our little prayer and praise. Why are we not in private—in public—in working—in talking—in buying and selling, doing all to Him who died for us? We want more light and love—light to view death, judgment, and eternity at our doors. What shall we think the moment we leave the body; when eternity opens to us—when we see all things without a veil? May we consider now, even this moment, “I am going—I am just upon the brink—just leaving all this world—just making the exchange for eternity!” I do from my heart entreat my dear brother H——, and all the family, as my last request, that the whole house may live for this eternity. I have always wanted you to be more in private agony with God—to have the whole family together at a fixed time morning and evening—to have the servants all present. When this is known, you will have no trouble; but every difficulty will disappear, as I have seen it in families of equal, nay, of much greater business than yours, when God has filled them with His glory. You will bear with me in this. I have mourned a hundred times, and shall mourn until I see your house in this order. I know God will never suffer you to lose one penny on this account. Religion in your house always appears to me to be too much the *second*, not the *first* business. I say all this to yourself, and pray that you may begin immediately, and God will be with you more and more. I hope my sister is better—I understand she is much shaken. *Well*, God will bring us together for ever. All our love to you and the whole house. God bless and reward you a hundred-fold. *I know He will.* Amen!

LXXIX.—TO MRS. PICKFORD.—*Newcastle, 1816.*

I received your letters; and the last to me were better than the first, because you point out your superior state as it respects your union with the Lord. Salvation is come to your heart indeed. Love casts out fear; as he is, so are you in this world. As he is separated, so are you separated from a world of evil. This gives you boldness in looking at the day of judgment; a clear witness, a clear view of God, of heaven. Oh, what satisfaction it yields to the soul! I am certain much is bought for us. I am equally certain all is promised to us, and that He cannot fail to give this great salvation. He justifies, He purifies, He then stays the mind on Himself; but He gathers us nearer and still nearer, till we feel we live in the presence of God every moment. This is our place, and this is heaven upon earth. Whether poor or rich, in company or without, with our near relations, or in their absence, the Lord is everything to us, and every place is full of Himself. We want no other heaven; we have all, and our God is this all. I long to see my particular friends, my relations, my brothers, and sisters, throughout the churches, live in this glory. I am certain you will in some way or other meet with tribulation; various changes will take place in this world, in your family, and yourself: we are not yet settled. But you will be ready to meet every change by constant watching and prayer, and by keeping up a lively faith in God. Never expect your heavenly Father to keep His covenant except on the ground of your acts of faith. This faith must be like the pendulum of a clock—it must be kept moving, to put the whole soul in motion. And, as faith increases, you will more quickly mount; you will run faster, labour more, love more, rejoice more, and drink the cup with greater cheerfulness. You will be more thankful for every blessing, for your station, connexions, and the instruments of your salvation. God is in our fellowship. It will not be broken. It is from heaven, and altogether spiritual. It will increase to eternity. I long much to feel what it will be, when separated from this vile body. I never had more pleasant walks by faith, in the heavenly country. I see the company, and I live amongst them; for “we are come to an innumerable company of angels; to the spirits of just men made perfect.” The manner is inexpressible, but the thing is certain. Faith is the evidence. Farewell! The everlasting God be with you always!

LXXX.—TO MR. WILKINSON.—*Newcastle*, 1816.

In your last letter I perceived that infirmities grow fast upon you. You begin to feel that you cannot work as you once did. Your body will shortly return to its native dust, and your spirit to God who gave it. Salvation should now swallow up our desires. To be with God in glory for ever, should animate our souls. We may yet have a burning fire in these old bodies; and the fire may so enliven, so quicken us, that sometime, "whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell." We may still be witnesses of the all-cleansing blood; witnesses in our latest moments of the fulness of God; witnesses that we have fought the good fight; and die shouting, "He is come; the Lord is come, to carry us to glory—glory for evermore!" Our short lives shall be prayer. Praying, we will yet be in an agony; we will yet look up; yea, we will live, every day live to Him. He is our God, and will not leave us. Satan is conquered; he falls before us; we stand on the necks of our enemies. The Lord grant that you may, in your latter days, prove to all the power of God, the love of God, the faithfulness of God—yea, the great salvation of God. Happy! happy! always rejoicing—never complaining—never teased—still believing—still a glad countenance—yea, ever appearing to all the same. Oh, that God may fill your mind more and more with love, joy, and hope of glory. I am waiting; be you always waiting, that we may be close together in glory, world without end. The very thought fires my soul as I write. What! to be together for ever, yea, for evermore! Oh, the place! the company! the glory! the employment! the praise! Amen and Amen.

LXXXI*.—TO MISS RHODES, *afterwards* MRS. GEORGE BRAMWELL.—*Newcastle*, 1816.

All things are of God, who hath made us happy partakers of the great blessing. The Saviour's death—his plea at the right hand of the Father—these are our consolation. Heaven is open to us through him. Salvation flows to us in his precious blood. Who can tell the glory which shall be revealed? We may indeed drink abundantly of the living stream: there is enough for all, and enough to *free* all. Nothing can be more pleasing to God. I grow, but not fast enough. My wife is much better in health. Her soul I know is in closer union

with God—all is well. I never so much meditated on the world to come. I long to be there, and cannot forget that my transit may be to-day. I want to be with the glorified. I am swallowed up sometimes with the thought—"GLORY EVERLASTING!" Live, oh, live till the Lord appears! Live in full union—watch against the tempter—God will protect—fly to his arms—he will say to you, "What is the matter? I will never leave thee—I will not forsake thee."—You cannot tell how glad we should be to see you at Newcastle. It would, I believe, be a blessing to us as well as to you. At least I hope so. Yet if your journey would in the least interfere with your duties, we must be resigned.

LXXXII.—TO MR. SIGSTON.—*Newcastle, 1816.*

I am glad to hear that your chief concern is to secure the salvation of your own soul, and that of your family, and to do all the good you possibly can. Will not the Lord perform his covenant? Will he not make known his glory, and change you into it yet more and more? Will he not give to you, and yours, all the blessings of his love? You know there is much more to come, yea, a being filled with the spirit—with the mind that was in Christ. Grow, my dear brother, grow in grace. Live a moment to secure an everlasting crown. I am labouring to live as near to God as any one I have ever known—nay, as near as St. Paul himself. I read more frequently his character, and study more closely his deadness to the world, his zeal, his love to souls, his labour, his being always ready for his change, and his desiring "rather to be with Christ." But I am more than ever convinced that, to accomplish this, I must redeem time to the uttermost: I must sleep no more, eat and drink no more, than nature requires; and this calls for daily self-denial, such as, I believe, our Lord meant in his divine instructions. The Testament, the book of God, is more precious than ever. I read it, and am lost in wonder, love, and praise.—My brother Sigston, I find that to be cleansed from sin is one thing; but to be filled with God, is much more. Dr. Clarke's note on that expression, "the fulness of God," never leaves me. I do beg, that we may have all that the Lord has promised. Do not tarry, my brother; run into all the salvation; and may I meet you in one of the first places in heaven. We have a blessed work in some parts of this circuit. I hear of good in other parts of the kingdom, but

the sound of distress is heard from every quarter. Ireland is in a convulsion, and England on the rack. God is angry with us; HE will punish, and we deserve it. But, mark, it is all from HIM: I cannot look at second causes. I look at the rod, and see who has appointed it;—but “the end is not yet.” May all the church now show their patience! This is the time. I am sure, if this were the case, God would shorten these days.

LXXXIII.—TO MR. TURNELL.—*Newcastle, Dec. 23, 1816.*

I promised to send you a letter by a friend some weeks ago, but was prevented. I received yours with gratitude, yea, with joy. I perceive the Lord is with you. You continue in love—the perfect love. Oh, that the whole church had received this blessing! Why not?—“because of unbelief.” Shall we ever see the day when this great salvation shall become general; when we shall again be of one heart and one mind, and “only love possess the whole?” I am glad to find from your letter, and also from others, that a work has broken out in the charity school, in answer to prayer. If the brethren act with proper wisdom, I have no doubt of its spread. The Lord give those persons all power, love, zeal, and caution, in this great business! Mrs. Turnell will find help from the Lord! He will bless her in the work. She must not fear, but be more than ever in prayer. Tell my friend Ryland, I expect to meet him shortly in glory; we shall then feel the immense benefit of full salvation. May we receive a full reward for ever! The Lord bless him in all his classes. I must tell you, I am given to prayer more than ever. I feel myself just on the brink of eternity, and am sensible I can change nothing when I am gone. This idea being so much with me, I am toiling with all my might. We have a work of God in some parts of this circuit, and a number are saved; yet there is no great increase in Newcastle. Oh, the distress!—but all can be borne in God! His judgments are truly abroad. May they have the desired effect! My wife is better in her health; and, I believe, lives near the Lord in blessed union. I am in expectation of reaching my crown before Conference;—but the will of the Lord be done! If I remain on earth and able to work, I shall be at liberty to go wherever my good brethren choose to put me,—whether it be East, West, North, or South. Oh, may the Lord be our guide in life, and give us a triumphant death!

LXXXIV.—TO MR. WILKINSON.—*Newcastle, July 19, 1817.*

I am still looking up—waiting for all the will of God, and never ceasing to cry to him. I often think I grow but slowly. This perfect union with God in Christ, is my constant aim, and to be changed into the same image. Time is less and less with me; it is a moment! Good God! why do we dwell on earth? Surely that we may receive a much brighter crown of glory. Faith in God is the most noble principle; it honours God, it rejoices angels, it rebukes devils, and it lays this world in ashes. I want more increase.—The Blood cleanses, the Spirit fills, the Divine nature is our boast. It is Heaven. Live, my brother Wilkinson, live for ever! Your body grows weak; you tremble; the tabernacle will shortly fall—let the soul be quite ready for its flight! We shall have thousands to welcome us; they are waiting. I long to be amongst them, when we shall meet yonder, yea, when we shall meet to part no more. I mourn, I am grieved, I sorrow, to see so many thousands left behind in darkness. O that I could persuade the world to come in! Well might Jesus weep over Jerusalem! I frequently look at the Son of God in that situation. O what he felt, what he saw respecting their final ruin!—We have astonishing numbers of failures amongst our friends in this part. I never before saw it in this way; and the distress increases. When shall the extremity be over. The nation has merited the judgment. It has such an effect upon my feelings, that I am constrained to cry mightily to God. If I indulged in the excess of my feelings, it would destroy my poor body.

LXXXV*.—TO HIS SON GEORGE.—*Manchester, 1817.*

You may think I feel sad in leaving you; but believing that I am in my place, I drink the cup, always trusting that I shall be with you in glory everlasting. I hope you increase in prayer and in praise. Live much—live continually to God. This will be your peace on earth. It will save you from all fear. It will make you ever willing to enter eternity. God will give his blessing. We may all have “life for evermore.” This should be our great concern—to live together, and with the blessed God throughout eternity. I beg—yea, I beg—that more earnest prayer may be presented by every one in our family. Make all your requests known to Him.

He cares for you a thousand times more than I can do. You will gain everything by devotion. Angels will wait upon you. The kind Providence of God will be over you; and that Providence cannot err.

LXXXVI.—TO HIS DAUGHTER.—*Manchester, 1817.*

I have you much on my mind, with your dear John. How is the work of salvation going on? Are you given to prayer? Have you confidence in God, that he can cleanse from all sin? Do you believe he is willing? Do you seek it by faith alone? Do you plead and bring it to the present time? Are you quite determined to receive it, or to perish crying out? Do you thus strive to enter in? Do you live in the daily sacrifice of yourself and children to God? O, how I long for your full salvation; your living in God always; receiving all in union with Christ; your being one with him! Do let me hear in your next, (and let it be by return of the bearer,) that the Lord is come; that he hath cleansed your heart; that you can witness, without fear, of the perfect love. O cry, cry to God mightily! Never rest till pure within. I pray daily for you. Do let me have an answer from God. Let me have my Ann and John to live in this salvation before I die! Let me see this fruit in my Ann! If you knew my concern, surely you would, even on this account, pray without ceasing, "I will not let thee go, I will not till my suit prevail!" From this time I will myself look up, and I shall expect an answer to my satisfaction. I shall then return my God most hearty thanks for you. I will kneel down and give him glory. Our love to all in the house. The Lord bless and reward you all an hundred-fold!

LXXXVII.—TO ROGER CRANE, ESQ.—*Manchester,*
Sept. 3, 1817.

Since my last rheumatic attack my right hand has continued contracted, so that I find a difficulty in writing; but I am sure it is high time to answer your very affectionate letter. I can assure you, it had such an effect on my mind, that it laid me in the dust with tears. O, my brother! we have passed through much tribulation; but the Lord has

wonderfully preserved us from falling. I am lost in astonishment when I look to our former and past acquaintance. It is by the mighty power of God that I continue. O, how near have I been at various times—how near being overcome! But an alarm has been sounded in my ears, and I have been snatched as a brand from the burning. You will unite in praises to Him who has preserved me in justification, in sanctification, in love, in union with my God,—living in his presence, and waiting for my change. I have had to do with all sorts of persons, with extreme afflictions, and with the face of devils; but all is love. This bears, believes, hopes, and endures. It never fails. I hunger, I thirst, I pray, and believe. Yet all is of Him;—never weaker, yet never so strong. O this full salvation, this full salvation! He bought it, He promised it, He imparts it. Glory, everlasting glory be to the Lamb of God! Forgive me when I say to you, my life is now prayer. I feel the need of it continually, and can only live in this duty. I hope you will join me in this, though absent in body. A little while and He will come! You and I will soon have done! Let us be ready, always ready to meet our Lord. All is fixed for ever, when we leave this world. We can never alter afterwards. May this sink deep into our hearts, and may we receive a full reward!

[The next letter is addressed to two friends who had recently been deprived of a daughter by death.]

LXXXVIII.—TO MR. THOMAS PEARSON, JUN.—*Salford,*
Sept. 27, 1817.

I believe you and dear P—— are lovers of the ever-blessed God; that you have believed in him; that you agree with every dispensation of his Providence; and that it is your settled opinion that Jehovah is infinitely wise, and that no error can be found in the proceedings of the Almighty. Yes, He does all things well, in Heaven above and on the earth beneath. Yet after all your confidence respecting his proceedings; after all your love to the Saviour; after all that he hath done for you; after all his kindness in your salvation, and in his supplies for body and soul, you may be tempted to suppose that He may deal severely with you. O, no! you were his children; Sarah was his own. He loved her, and

has richly provided for her:—she is in glory, and will wait for you to be with you for ever. I know your feelings: I have felt the same. I went through it. I drank the cup. I felt the pangs; yet the Lord said, “All is well. What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.” He will say the same to you in your sorrow; you will look up and say, “All is right.” Yea, every tear will raise you to an act of resignation. You will drink the cup with thanksgiving, whilst angels sing above, on Sarah’s possessing glory. You will see by faith her place before the throne, and will sing to God the Saviour. I do assure you I am so satisfied with the dispensation, that whilst I weep with you, I rejoice on her account: for I began to contrive in my mind for her future situation; and, with all my contrivance, I trembled for her. In this I see the wise hand of God. She is where I wanted her to be—she is saved. Glory, glory, glory be to God, and to the Lamb. You cannot sorrow as those without hope. Be ready, P——, be ready,—cleansed from sin, filled with God. Live to him more than ever. Nothing on earth is our own. We are Christ’s, and all we have belongs to Him. Show yourselves a man and a woman of God. Show your love, your patience, your hope, your gratitude, and your zeal for God, for the good of many. All will convince you, that God is love; that he loves both you and yours. Nothing brings greater glory to God than a behaviour so consistent with all the acts of the Almighty, especially his act of taking away the beloved of our souls thus suddenly. What a blessed company! what a glorious sight! What a fulness, what delight!—I am lost in desire! I cannot, otherwise I would fly, to behold the glory. I would see your dear Sarah in a moment. I would leave all to be where she is. May I every day be an observer of the place, by a living faith! May I always possess the evidence of things not seen! May I realize the situation, and die to be triumphant in everlasting bliss!—You will give our love to Ann; and tell her, from me, to love the Lord, to pray much to be ready that she may see her sister again. I hope Ann will be truly religious, that she may be a comfort to you both, and live with you for ever. My wife unites in weeping with you; yet she is persuaded that all is well, and shall be well with us all.

LXXXIX*.—TO MRS. LONGDEN.—*Manchester, 1817.*

I have had many conflicts since I saw you. My path is continually disputed: every inch of ground gained requires a serious battle—such is my experience from day to day! I am called to suffer with my Lord, and my engagements are frequently such that none but God can know them. On my coming to this place, everything appeared to be against me, as regards my being generally useful; but I gave myself to continual prayer. I received power from God as I wanted it—yea, at the very time (such was the goodness of my God) a great shower fell on the congregations. The first Sunday my way was opened for general good, and I pursued it. My first love-feast was crowned with the salvation of twenty souls; the second, with the like number, or more. This gave me much consolation. The band became crowded, and many received salvation. Here, then, I see prosperity; yet I have not observed that general in-gathering into the church for which I wait. Oh, that in my little time on earth, I may ever be a spectator of his glorious work in the salvation of sinners! I mourn, from the consideration that God himself, according to his ordinary way of proceeding, cannot do much in the present state of Methodism. I could explain to you, but I need not. The accounts of a number of our principal friends having left the world so lately, have greatly affected us. They are gone, however, to welcome *us* into glory everlasting! I have scarcely seen through a day of late without taking a turn in my meditation into the heavenly world. I always see Mr. Longden, as I think, in the foremost ranks, and as busy as ever in obedience to God; but I am yet at a loss to know in what way. Well, “we shall know hereafter.” “A little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” I hope you will be supported in all your tribulation—that you will find your heavenly Father true to his promises—that he will be your salvation every day—that he will bear you up and show you his glory—and that he will bless you with peace, resignation, and the hope of eternal life. Be always ready. Live every day to Him. I know He cannot fail. No—He will not. You shall receive the great salvation. In one moment He can speak you clean. He will fill your soul with love. All love?—it is heaven on earth! I pray that God may thus bless and bring you from glory into glory!

XC*.—TO MISS LONGDEN.—*Manchester, 1817.*

Since I have been informed that your illness has returned, I have been much concerned. How uncertain is everything in this world! No dependence—but on Him who suffered for us and rose again!—I am happy to find that your cup of salvation is pretty full. You have seen an end of the evil nature, and a bringing in of the everlasting righteousness. Let your whole soul rely upon His word. He cannot—shall not—will not fail! You will have such composure—such love—such delight—such sweetness in seeing Him who hath so greatly loved us! Whatever may happen to the frail body, the Spirit shall soon be glorious. Oh, this “being like Him!” We know not now what we shall be; but we shall see Him as he is. We could not bear the sight *now*; but *then* we must know even as we are known. I never had so strong a view of the glorified state as at present. I have, in a sense, lost sight of all on earth: it is gone, and yet I am in it. A moment shall land me in yonder place—shall shut me up with God. Praise Him all heaven: praise Him all earth: praise Him this soul! We shall all praise Him together—fathers, and mothers, and friends, for ever!—Your state is, indeed, afflictive: yet Infinite Wisdom must be viewed in all its bearings. Fix your eye, and say—“Thou canst not err: I will not choose: it is enough that I shall be with Father, and Son, and Spirit, and thousands of the redeemed before the throne!” Fear not! Your strength shall be according to your day, and your faith shall never fail!

XCI.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Salford, Dec. 23, 1817.*

I received your kind letter, with love and praise to God our heavenly Father, that you are preserved in health, and I hope in stronger resolution to live to Him who suffered for us! You know that we are every moment dependent upon Him for all things. “We live, and move, and have our being in Him.” Yet all is of God. To be clear in pardon for all our sins—to be pure in heart—to live in love—this is heaven on earth. What is all the world compared with this? We are easy, which way soever we look. All is calm. Eternity only increases our happiness; yea, even death has lost his sting. All is joy and the utmost delight. To live in profession, is so far well; but to enjoy the kingdom—to live in God—to

have union with Him—to bear His image—God—and finish the work—this is our grand aim on earth. I never had so strong a desire that you should be in eternal glory. I pray for it continually. I am awake sleeping and waking. Oh, let me be with you. If you give yourself to pleading prayer, all will be done; especially if you come to God through the Mediator, all will be given you. Be importunate, and say “I will not let thee go.” To be great in this world, is nothing; but to be great in the sight of Jehovah—to be proclaimed in heaven as great—to be crowned with glory, and had in everlasting remembrance with God—to unite with me in contemplating the Divine perfections—and to stand before the throne—how glorious! Oh, the company! the enjoyment! the duration! I am lost in wonder and astonishment: the foretaste of that meeting enraptures my soul. I long for that situation;—immediately and to all eternity! Praise Him, oh, ye angels! ye saints of God! ye glorified!

XCVI*.—TO HIS SON WILLIAM.—*Manchester*, 1818.

We had been waiting for a letter, and yours came in season: it was refreshing to our minds. Your health—your profession—your intended union are so agreeable to us! We look forward to be with you in everlasting glory. What is time? What is the world? What are all earthly enjoyments? All things are designed to produce the blessed effect—salvation in Christ Jesus. The world to come is all; and will be found so to every person! We must give an account to God. I long to see the day. May we all be ready! Strive, oh, strive, to enter in: the door is now wide open. The arms of mercy are now stretched out. Salvation is come nigh. Only believe, and see his glory in the face of Christ Jesus. I hope that all will be yours in time and eternity. Be a man of God—be quite devoted to Him—live to His glory—be alive, and do the work of God with all your heart. May you be blessed indeed—blessed of Him for ever!

XCVII.—TO JOHN REAY, ESQ.—*Manchester*, May 11, 1818.

I am glad for the salvation you have lately experienced; you are spared to increase in the love of God. Let it be your

grand business to receive a full reward. We are exceedingly liable, as preachers, to lose ourselves in outward business; I mean, in means, forms, &c., and you are liable to lose yourself in worldly business, and not to do all things with an eye to God, which will prevent the close fellowship, the heaven of loving God alone. I could write it twenty times over to you, that it is continual prayer with strong faith, which will produce every effect. You know how many slide back in the necessary ordinances. Some, by improper hearing; some, by improper prayers; some, in singing; some, in teaching; many, in sacraments. The eye is taken from God, and a want of power runs through all the means. Hence we are neither cold nor hot. Oh, my dear Reay, be alive; be a man of God; be in the Spirit; be a flame of heavenly fire. Burn, yea, burn for God and for souls. I know your station; I know you will be shot at. I know every plan will be used to ruin you. Be all on the watch. Suspect everything that does not represent the meek and lowly Jesus. Have nothing but what he holds forth to you. Receive all by Christ, and from Christ. Be satisfied in having Him for your all. Be clear in full salvation, without a doubt. You will then produce deep conviction in others. I want you to live fully, to live for ever; to live in all the glory, and to be changed into it more and more. The Lord seal these things upon your heart! If I could take hold of your hand, it would be the highest gratification to me in Christ Jesus. I am receiving more love; it comes by drops after agony of prayer. My soul becomes less than ever; but God is all I want, at all times.

XCIV.—TO HIS SON JOHN.—*Manchester, June 2, 1818.*

Believe me, I am more concerned for your eternal welfare than ever, for I have been much impressed with these words lately: "I am ready to be offered up; the time of my departure is at hand." I long to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The heavenly world is more than ever in my view. Oh, the change, the glorious change which must then take place! But to see all my children there, and to be together for evermore! Live, oh, my John, live for eternity—for glory! "The end of all things is at hand; be sober, and watch unto prayer."

XCV*.—TO MR. WILKINSON.—*Manchester*, 1818.

My feelings have been most acute with respect to the extreme distress of many families: accounts from different places are of the most painful description. The Almighty can find out some method of relief; but no sunshine at present! The Lord is most powerfully making this turn to the salvation of some souls; but numbers, nay, the generality, are hardened. What will be the end? I never was so much intent upon glory. I am contriving, if possible, to pray more than ever; and as my time is short, to be fully ready. I do say, whatever we were yesterday, we want a fresh stock to-day; and that is only to be received by repeated acts of faith, and by continual prayer. What shall we think when we open our eyes in eternity? Shall we then have done too much? Shall we have anything to spare? Oh, no! May our longing souls ever be alive, and may we ever make Christ our example in all things! I will meet you every day at the throne. I will be with you for ever. Being parted from my friends, somehow seems less to me than formerly. I see the time is so short—just a moment—and then all sorrow ceases. An eternal calm with God! I beg you will spend the short remainder of your life in all energy of mind. As the body grows feeble, the fire will brighten within. Your soul will be on the wing for heaven. Let every morning appear to be the last. Let us so much increase, that we may shine as the sun for ever.

XCVI.—TO MRS. REAY.—*Manchester*, July 16, 1818.

Your frequent indisposition may have appeared mysterious, both to you and to your dear husband; many of God's works do to us in our present state of existence; and yet we may, with the utmost confidence, pronounce them to be in infinite wisdom. It will be to your utmost satisfaction to continue this view of his proceedings. I more than ever wonder at his working; but can follow every wheel with a shout of "glory!" Well might the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy! He has done all things well. Your salvation from in-dwelling evil, I hope, is complete; your receiving the witness of the all-cleansing blood—your being made perfect in love—your dwelling in God and God in you. Then there is no torment, no dread of death, eternity, judgment, &c. This view makes all calm,

and fills the soul with divine consolation. It is heaven, already heaven! Happy, happy spirit! thy guilt is removed and the soul filled with God. Everything within, without, around, above, beneath, increases the smile. What is pain? All is God, and God is all. I should be exceedingly glad to see you before your flight; for it may be suddenly. Your poor flesh can only bear a little, very little; but I suppose you have no objection. Well, the will of God be done! Remember where you are going. I cannot think of it without desire, without joy. Oh, the numbers that are waiting for us! Will not the next meeting swallow up all sorrow of parting? Yea, for ever, for ever. Look up, you will shortly be crowned with immortality, with eternal life. I am confident that we cannot detach any place from God's presence, from the whole. If so, His glory is here and at Carville, the same as in heaven. And we may live in that glory *here!* Faith brings it in, and increases it even so much that we feel changed into it more and more. I now live in this glory more than ever, and am waiting to meet you, to receive my glorious body, that we may see face to face what we now are able to see by faith only. The change will astonish us: it will astonish all the saints in glory. We ought to do nothing in this world, but as a help to this glory; and if we esteem anything, merely to serve the body, to the injury of the soul, we thereby prove that we prefer the body to the soul. The Lord be with you in affliction—in health, if permitted—in life, and in death.



APPENDIX.

- A.—NOTE ON THE EXTRAORDINARY CASES DETAILED.
- B.—NOTE ON MR. BRAMWELL'S SUPPOSED CONNEXION
WITH MR. KILHAM'S CONTROVERSY.
- C.—NOTE ON MRS. BRAMWELL'S DEATH.
- D.—VISIT TO MR. BRAMWELL'S BIRTH-PLACE.



APPENDIX.

A.

Note on the extraordinary cases detailed. (p. 66, &c.)

It is scarcely necessary to say that the marvellous incidents which have been related of Mr. Bramwell, and particularly such as Mr. Greensmith's case (p. 67), have been productive of no little embarrassment in the preparation of this memoir. The simplest course would have been to omit them altogether; but this was a step we did not feel at liberty to take, because if the events were *actual occurrences*, they are striking peculiarities in Mr. Bramwell's history: if *otherwise*, they still exhibited such an approximation to the marvellous, that many pious and intelligent individuals were profoundly convinced of their reality, and treated them as genuine manifestations of some extraordinary power. In either point of view, therefore, they are prominent features which no biographer could properly overlook. They are also interesting because they indicate the *prestige* with which his name was invested; for if a man who made no pretension to greatness, and whose character and conduct totally forbid the suspicion that he could practise or patronise anything like delusion, was extensively regarded as the parent of a series of marvels, that fact of itself would compel some notice of these singular relations.

With reference to the *facts* involved—and by facts we mean those details and particulars which are palpably the subjects of human cognizance, and can be definitely determined by observation or experience—it is but an act of duty to state that they rest upon evidence which we believe has been honestly given and firmly believed. All beyond is open to criticism. The internal bearing of those facts, and the inferences to be drawn from them, may be canvassed at discretion. Thus it is a fact that Mr. Bramwell 'detected' many an 'impostor': the circumstances also are facts; but the *theory* of such transactions is a subject for individual consideration.

Probably some of our readers will come to the conclusion at which a witty philosopher arrived with respect to ghosts; namely, that he believed there *were* such things, but did not believe a single case which had been recorded. Others may admit that similar incidents *have* occurred, but yet deny the particular cases detailed. However this may be—whether Mr. Bramwell's marvels

were real or imaginary—the recognition of extraordinary attributes not merely as possible, but in some cases as actual gifts, is too closely connected with the history of Christianity, and too deeply involved in the very philosophy of religion, to be regarded as a light or unimportant question.

Amongst those who attach full credit to the inspired writings, there can be no dispute respecting the repeated exhibition of marvellous phenomena in ancient times, and through the instrumentality of human beings. The very power to work miracles has been often intrusted to mortals, and this branch of the Almighty's prerogative exercised through the agency of men of no higher mould than ourselves. But it is said the age of marvels is past. The present era, at all events, is distinguished by its decided prejudice against every thing which bears the slightest resemblance to thaumaturgy. If the apostles of Christ were now to repeat their mighty works on British ground, they would, perhaps, be treated as impostors—confounded with the Cagliostros and Prince Hohenlohes of a recent epoch—and not improbably committed to the House of Correction, or ordered to the treadmill. Faith is too often a chronological or geographical question—regulated by time, place, custom, and other adventitious circumstances, instead of developing itself as an original and independent faculty.

But upon what authority is it said that the age of marvels is past? And if past—*why* past? Admitting that the Almighty has frequently operated in an extraordinary manner—that his nature and his power are still the same—how can we conclude that similar effects may not occur in modern times as well as in ancient, and in the streets of London as well as in those of Jerusalem? If the Divine force is a constant force, and a change has really taken place in man's relationship to that force, the fault is assuredly his own. If there is no diminution in divine energy, there is then a diminution in human faith. It is impossible to read the Scriptures, and particularly those portions which relate to our Saviour's ministry on earth, without perceiving that an almost unlimited power is assigned to faith. No one ever asserted its virtue so emphatically as the Redeemer himself. He may be said to have conceded everything to it—even up to a miracle. "According to your faith," He declares, "be it done unto you." Nay, if it only equalled a grain of mustard-seed—if that grain were but applied to the great lever of prayer—it should tear up mountains by the roots, and hurl them into the depths of the sea! Believe—"and nothing shall be impossible unto you." "Have faith in God"—and you may have anything from God! And what a charm there seems to have been in this virtue in the eyes of the Saviour! Even when it could find no tongue to speak—when it sought no higher expression than a stolen touch, how tenderly he turned to the trembling woman, and comforted—adopted—and healed her! On the other hand, His denunciation of incredulity is equally as explicit. He wonders at the unbelief of his countrymen, and refuses to do any mighty works amongst them. And how far may

not this be characteristic of more modern periods? The marvellous operations of faith were not confined to the apostolic era: Saint Paul has given us a sketch of its *ancient* history, tracing it from the dawn of human existence, through a magnificent series of examples, down to his own dispensation, and exhibiting some of its most brilliant feats in language of unrivalled force and sublimity.*

Nor are these mighty principles—the power of God and the faith of man—to be restricted to particular occasions or particular circumstances: they are for daily use. Every *prayer* is an appeal to Almighty strength: every prayer should be an expression of human reliance. The *consequences*, therefore,—considering the unlimited resources of the Deity—may be little or great, commonplace or extraordinary (and perhaps one just as well as the other), according to the exigency of the case, or the intensity of the petition. So far as God is concerned, it may be immaterial whether the application requires a force of ten or of a million for its fulfilment: it is as easy for Him to make a sun as an animalcule. It does not, of course, follow that the Almighty always *chooses* to employ his resources in any way, or to any extent, man may desire. The Divine Being may have His reasons—private reasons we may call them—for refusing to grant even the simplest favour, though sought with the liveliest faith. But so long as the suppliant has no ground for supposing that such exist—so long as he tenders his request with due submissiveness to the Divine will, then, unless the object sought be really incompatible with the purposes of heaven, the practical results of any prayer are dependent upon the amount of faith exercised, and may be limited only by the grasp and energy of the petitioner. The one power—that of God—being a stationary power, of infinite capacity, and capable of meeting any draught; the other—the faith of man—a shifting variable force; the latter may be exalted to almost any degree of intensity, and, if so exalted, will probably lead to proportionate results. For example, the ability of God to convert human souls is unlimited: one man prays for the salvation of a single individual, and obtains what he asks—but no more: another prays for the salvation of hundreds—for a ‘revival’—and obtains his object also, because he *believes up to it*. Thus, where the cause is unequivocally good, the consequences may be solely determined by the amount of practical faith. Scripture furnishes us with a beautiful and almost arithmetical illustration of the effect of successive additions to this force, in the case of Abraham interceding for the inhabitants of Sodom. The patriarch asks that the guilty city may be spared, if there should be found but fifty righteous men within its walls. It is granted. He asks for more:—perhaps there may be only forty-five? More is granted to the amount required. Abraham augments his claim:—peradventure there may be only forty? Granted again. He proceeds further:—he doubles his demand: he asks now in tens and not by fives. This also succeeds—“I will not do it, if I find thirty there!” Still another ten:—peradventure there shall

* Hebrews, chap. xi.

be twenty found there? The petitioner prevails again. Yet once more—just this once—persists the faithful Abraham! If there should be but ten in all Sodom? And once more God yields to the importunity of the supplicant:—"I will not destroy it for ten's sake!" Thus, by consecutive applications of force, did the patriarch narrow the fearful terms on which Jehovah's vengeance was to be outpoured. As fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten were to the whole population of the unhappy city, so in succession was the value and success of Abraham's belief. Weak faith might have paused at the first term; and had there been but five and forty righteous discovered on that terrible census, Sodom must have perished: strong faith labours on—and on—until it obtains a promise of immunity if there should happen to be but ten!

Now, if prayer has accomplished so much, and if faith has been divinely recognised as the condition of success, and the means of putting in motion the resources of an Infinite Being—what authority have we for doubting their efficacy in recent days, or questioning their competency to the production of events not less remarkable than those of Scriptural history? Bring together the same agencies, endowed with the same amount of activity, and it matters little whether this is done in the year 18 or 1800—why should not the results be the same? If Abraham, Elijah, or Paul were to live again in the present century, would their petitions be less operative or efficient?

But to revert to the marvellous incidents or extraordinary 'answers to prayer,' related of Mr. Bramwell. It is clear, that if faith and importunity *can* accomplish wonders, few have ever been better qualified for such achievements. He had all the grand requisites for the work. In holiness, it has been said by many, that they never met with his equal: for apostolic fire and simplicity of character, he might have been numbered amongst the earliest propagators of Christianity; his faith was daring and indomitable; his intercourse with Deity was so constant and familiar, that it might almost be said he lived in the Presence-chamber; and his actual success as a minister of Christ was so decisive, that no better proof of his credit with Heaven could be suggested or demanded.

Those, therefore, of our readers who believe that prayer can *still* effect such wonders, will undoubtedly be justified in assuming that Mr. Bramwell was precisely the man, through whose agency they might most appropriately be accomplished; whilst those who, on the other hand, deny their modern feasibility, will probably impute the extraordinary stories in question to the credulous veneration of the relators, and rank them amongst the miracles of Xavier, or the marvels recorded in the *Acta Sanctorum*. Fortunately, Mr. Bramwell's character is one which does not depend merely upon thaumaturgic properties: a minister who was the chosen instrument of the Holy One in opening the eyes of the spiritually blind, and in healing the spiritually sick, has in that fact a far higher claim to our respect than any which could attach to him in the capacity of oculist, or physician to the body, even under circumstances of so remarkable a nature.

B.

Note as to Mr. Bramwell's supposed connexion with Mr. Kilham's Controversy (p. 51).

Since Mr. Bramwell's death, attempts have been made to exhibit him in a novel and somewhat incongruous character. We have seen that he was a devoted Christian—a gallant soldier of the Cross—a man mighty in words and in deeds—a well-accredited ambassador of God, and the honoured agent of the Almighty in the conversion of an immense number of souls: we have now to connect with these high attributes the eminent functions of a spiritual peace-breaker and a sectarian incendiary!

For this important contribution to Mr. Bramwell's personal history, we are particularly indebted to an article in the 'Wesleyan Methodist Magazine' for May, 1845. In a memoir of the Rev. Charles Atmore, inserted in that periodical (January to June), the writer introduces the subject of Mr. Kilham's division, which took place when Mr. Bramwell was stationed in the Sheffield circuit, and says—"that Mr. Kilham was encouraged in his divisive speculations by the preachers stationed in the Sheffield circuit is notorious"—that "Mr. Bramwell afterwards saw fit to change the ground on which he stood; and Mr. T—for a short time only cast in his lot with Mr. Kilham; it was not, however, in their power to quench the fire of contention in Sheffield, which, if not primarily kindled by them, was supplied with abundance of fuel, of which Mr. Kilham took ample advantage." The writer quotes Mr. Benson, Mr. McDonald, and others, on the subject, and, strangely enough, resorts to Mr. Kilham himself and his biographer, in support of the accusation.*

We cannot be certain what is the precise signification attached to the above expressions in the mind of Mr. Atmore's memorialist, but presume they are designed to imply something which will not contribute to enhance Mr. Bramwell's reputation either as a Christian or a Wesleyan minister. By those who are interested in his memory, and who can yield full credit to the various testimonies embodied in the previous pages, any construction which tends to represent him as the deliberate antagonist of religion, or a religious cause in any shape whatever—this being apparently the amiable purpose of the charge—will be resented as highly injurious and offensive. We should be happy to think that the writer of the article in question had no intention to disparage Mr. Bramwell; but the circumstances under which the subject is introduced, or, to speak more accurately, forcibly injected into Mr. Atmore's bio-

* With regard to Mr. McDonald, Mr. Atmore's biographer is unfortunate in referring to him as an authority. An application was made to that gentleman by a member of Mr. Bramwell's family on the publication of the memoir of Mr. Benson, complaining of the obnoxious statement. His reply was so honorable—his disclaimer of any odious imputation so decisive—and his expressions of regret so generous, that it would be impossible to mention the circumstance without at the same time adverting to the noble and Christian spirit in which he endeavoured to repair the injury he had unwittingly done.

graphy, impose a decided negative upon such a supposition, even if an uncharitable act could justly calculate upon a charitable interpretation. The spirit which dictated the attack, seems to us still more objectionable than the attack itself; nor is its merit at all enhanced by the insidious and suggestive form it has assumed.

Let us, however, in the first instance, take the case in the most favorable light for the writer; we will assume for the moment that every fact he asserts, and every inference he draws or insinuates, are strictly true—*why advert to Mr. Bramwell's proceedings at all?* He is preparing a memoir of the Rev. Charles Atmore. Instead of tracking the footsteps of that gentleman with biographical exclusiveness, he plunges into the thorny labyrinth of controversy, and there contrives to come into collision with the Rev. William Bramwell! How this singular rencontre can be logically justified, we are unable to comprehend. We cannot perceive any essential connexion between Mr. Atmore and Mr. Kilham—still less between Mr. Atmore and Mr. Kilham's imagined supporter, Mr. Bramwell. It is not in our power to trace the chain of connexion by which these two apparently distant terms—C. A. and W. B.—are brought into such imperative relationship, that it is necessary to criminate the one individual, in order to excuse or exalt the other. Mr. Atmore indeed attends a Conference at which the claims of Mr. Kilham's party are discussed, but if this occurrence—one of the minor crises, we presume, in Mr. Atmore's career—involves a history of the 'Division,' and a disparaging critique upon Mr. Bramwell's proceedings, the latter may be dragged into the biography of every individual who happened to appear at the same Conference, and pilloried in honour of every member of the then legal Hundred. Mr. Atmore also travelled at one time in the Sheffield circuit, where Mr. Bramwell was stationed at the period when the controversy took place. But so have many other preachers; and if the locality in itself could be supposed to authorize any exposition of Mr. Bramwell's delinquencies, every Wesleyan minister who may have performed a year's service in the circuit, has purchased for his biographer the enviable privilege of casting a stone, or whatever missile he may patronise, at the memory of a departed brother. Mr. Atmore further adverts to some of the topics of contention in his journals or correspondence; but so also would most of his ministerial contemporaries, none of whom would, for that reason, we presume, expect to serve as formal types of Methodism, or as nuclei for its controversial history.

Still, as we are aware that profound thinkers are frequently characterised by extreme subtlety in the association of their ideas, we should have been willing to assume that such might have been the case in the present instance, had not the writer's partiality for irrelevant combinations been too palpably exhibited to admit of so accommodating a conclusion. Mr. Atmore's name is wonderfully suggestive. It appears to be mysteriously involved in all the debatable topics which agitated Methodism during his career. It leads the biographer by occult and incomprehensible steps to the

deed of declaration—the sacramental question—the Lichfield confederacy—the Bristol affray—the Dewsbury dissensions—the plan of pacification, and various other polemical subjects. It even presents to his mind some decided connexion between the reverend gentleman and Lord Sidmouth's Bill of 1811. Now, all this may be very innocent in itself, however inconsequent; but when such excursions are undertaken *at the expense of other individuals*, they became rather objectionable. When Mr. Atmore is sent by Conference to the Colne circuit, it may suit the writer to make a *détour* into the Dewsbury circuit, in order to look after the 'Dewsbury House;' but it is scarcely reasonable to require Mr. Atlay (the secession minister) to pay his fare for the jaunt. He may even be at liberty to rehearse the Sheffield tragedy as an important episode in the career of Mr. Atmore—but not at the cost of Mr. Bramwell. If his materials were scanty—which is not his fault—we should not have ventured to complain, had he introduced a disquisition on the Pelagian heresy—or a moderate history of the Council of Trent—or a brief sketch of the Hampton Court Conference, in illustration of Mr. Atmore's life and character. These could have hurt nobody now extant. But an attack upon the memory of a man like William Bramwell—wounding, as it must do, many living friends and relatives, who justly venerate that memory—is a species of gratuitous barbarity which ought to be resolutely repelled.

The accusation is therefore *wanton—irrelevant—invidious*: and yet, if it were not so, it would be most *inequitable*. Was it just to overlook the important services which Mr. Bramwell rendered in the Sheffield circuit—to give him no credit for the great additions which he unquestionably made to the society? Even supposing the items of accusation were far heavier than can be pretended, it is clear that if the account were fairly balanced, a large residuum of good would appear to Mr. Bramwell's advantage—seeing that the assailant himself admits the obnoxious proceedings to have been only of temporary operation.

The charge is also peculiarly *unfortunate* in its wantonness. Had it been either proper or politic to depreciate Mr. Bramwell, Mr. Atmore was one of the last men in whose favour it should have been attempted. It is enough, however, to say on this point, that hundreds of names might have been more gracefully selected as the pretext for an attack.* Of course, Mr. Atmore is not to be blamed for a biographer's misdeeds; we think he would never have sanctioned the addition of a single page to his memoir at the cost of Mr. Bramwell. He would probably have cancelled every line in the 'Methodist Magazine' for May, 1845, which refers to the latter.

Secondly.—Still assuming (by way of hypothesis) that the facts

* It ought to be remarked that our reference to Mr. Atmore is confined to the simple matter of fact, that his name ought not to have been chosen for the purpose of an attack upon Mr. Bramwell, even if such a step had been in all other respects perfectly unobjectionable. We cannot but regret that any allusion whatever to Mr. Atmore should have been necessitated by a biographer's prostitution of his memory to so disreputable a purpose.

alleged by the writer are correct, we deny his *inferences* and *insinuations*. The charge is obviously intended to import something odious or improper in the conduct of Mr. Bramwell. It therefore implies either *moral* obliquity or *intellectual* error. Suppose the former. It might be difficult for the accuser himself to appraise the amount of delinquency involved; but a religious incendiary—a man who ‘supplies’ or ‘kindles the fires of contention’—is commonly imagined to be a dangerous individual. The phrase does not exactly sound well. It frequently receives a very disagreeable construction, and is supposed to denote a person of doubtful piety, if not of decided wickedness. At any rate, few would like to be known by such a title. But adopting the facts as stated, do they justify any unfavorable inference? An attempt to set fire to a system may be a very great crime, but it may also happen to be quite the reverse! History furnishes us with many very decided illustrations of this truth. In order, therefore, to give a determinate form to the charge in question, the writer should have particularised the moral functions against which Mr. Bramwell sinned, or shown the peculiar interests he attacked. Now, in piety—purity of life—honesty of purpose—loftiness of aim—consciousness of character, and profound devotion of soul to the service of his Maker, we believe he was unassailable. Can the accuser single out any of these moral properties—or any moral properties at all—in which he thinks Mr. Bramwell was deficient? Or, can he say that the latter ever did anything to injure the interests of religion, which it was the business of his life to promote, *knowing* that such would be the effect of his proceedings? We are persuaded that the writer, if required to reduce his charge to a specific form, would shrink from imputing the slightest moral impropriety to Mr. Bramwell in reference to his Sheffield policy. The whole history of the man would be a proud refutation of any such suspicions. Whatever he did in the matter, was honestly done—done according to the best of his judgment, and therefore it could be no *moral* offence.

The charge, then, must resolve itself into a simple impeachment of Mr. Bramwell's *judgment*. Now, it is true that the latter might err in his views of the disputed topics—but who says he did? Does Mr. Atmore's biographer? If so, we may fairly assume that Mr. Bramwell's opinion was quite as weighty as his accuser's, and therefore nothing is decided—the argument stands in *equilibrio*. Does the writer call in aid the opinion of Mr. Benson and others? Mr. Benson and others might all be wrong, and Mr. Bramwell perfectly right. Does he appeal to a majority? A majority cannot finally or infallibly determine a matter of faith or judgment, or else Christianity would have been swamped at the outset, and if still put to the vote, would be left in a fearful minority. How, then, does he draw any authoritative conclusion that there was an error at all? This is just what constitutes the effrontery of the proceeding! The writer may have his own opinion upon the subject of Mr. Kilham's controversy—and he has a right

to that opinion—but for the same reason, others are equally entitled to theirs; he is no more entitled to try, condemn, and censure a person as criminal who holds a contrary view, than that person would be entitled to try, condemn, and censure him. Yet he, a private individual, not even pretending to Papal infallibility, so far as we can ascertain, undertakes to pronounce a peremptory and punitive decision upon a question which—being a question of simple opinion—cannot be decisively settled either by any single fiat, or by any number of collective voices whatever. Suppose an objector should say to him—“ You charge A. B. with participation in C. D.’s plans or ‘divisive speculations’ as an offence—how do you prove that those plans or divisive speculations were wrong?” All that the writer could reply, would be, that this one man, or these ten men, or those thousand men *thought* so. “ Thought!” would be the natural retort; “ does any amount of opinion make a thing right or wrong in *another*, or indeed determine the ultimate qualities of a question at all, either for you or him? Before you can definitely condemn A. B. for such participancy, you must establish it as a fact, or as an irresistible demonstration, that the plans adverted to *were* erroneous and improper. How is this to be done?” We have no wish to dip into the subject of Mr. Kilham’s division. We have carefully abstained from controversial topics in this work, although justice to Mr. Bramwell might have frequently dictated some exposition of his sentiments on various points. Pursuing this policy, we must be understood to express no opinion upon the question to which the wanton animadversions of Mr. Atmore’s biographer have compelled us to allude; we confine our remarks to mere defensive argumentation, and giving the assailant the benefit of every favorable assumption, think it a duty to show him that none of them can be maintained. Our business at present, is simply to checkmate him, whatever turn he may choose to give to his game.

We cannot, however, but regret that an enlightened individual should have fallen into the old and pernicious error of impugning a man’s character because that man might happen to differ from him in judgment upon a debateable topic. It is still more to be deplored that, in a strife of parties, one should be arrogantly condemned as the author of all the mischief which ensues, upon the mere assertion of the other. But perhaps it is most of all to be lamented that a question of discipline, or of church government, should be construed into a deliberate attack upon religion! The Nominalists and Realists fought over their metaphysical abstractions with such ferocity that they finally accused each other of committing the “ unpardonable sin.” Some very good people, it is said, regarded Mr. Kilham’s death in the light of a judgment inflicted by Providence for the crime of adopting peculiar views on the subject of ecclesiastical discipline,—that is, views different from their own. In like manner, but with more lenity, Mr. Atmore’s biographer appears to consider that Mr. Bramwell’s alleged participation in those views is not merely an offence against *his* judgment, but also

an outrage upon religion, and an injury to the church of Christ! We cannot see this: we are perfectly willing to admit that Mr. Bramwell may have sinned against Mr. Atmore's biographer in entertaining views which were contrary to his own—but not against the faith, the church, or the Almighty! When shall we learn that a system is not a religion, any more than a suit of clothes is a man, and that to alter the one does not *necessarily* imply wickedness, any more than to tear the other implies an attempt to commit murder! Luther was not the enemy of God, because he strove to tear down the Papacy; nor was John Wesley a disturber of religion, because he dispensed with bishops, and admitted laymen into the pulpit. Mr. Kilham's speculations might be wrong—we do not now attempt to argue the question either one way or the other; but it is clear that no honorable-minded Wesleyan, endowed with a truly catholic spirit, would consider it just (however strongly he might feel on the subject) to regard his own opinion as final, or to erect that opinion into a standard of infallible truth to which every one was bound to conform. The great principle which lies at the root of Protestantism—which also constitutes the very basis of philosophical impartiality—is precisely the one outraged by Mr. Atmore's biographer in the present instance. He might with equal propriety have dogmatically assumed the right of determining between the material and undulatory hypotheses of light, and decreed that all were reprobates who opposed his decision; or undertaken to settle whether Toryism or Whiggism were the true political creed, and denounced every member of parliament who held a contrary faith as a disturber of the public peace, and an enemy to “the altar and the throne.”

We object, therefore, to the writer's assumption of conclusive judgment,—to every inference drawn from that assumption to Mr. Bramwell's disadvantage, and even if, by any latitudinarian concession, his decision could be accepted as final, we should object to any offensive imputation upon another who might honestly maintain a contrary opinion. He has consequently demonstrated nothing to Mr. Bramwell's discredit under either view of the matter.

Before we quit the question—as one of mere judgment—we must give the writer the benefit of a possible argument. He may say that Mr. Bramwell afterwards changed his own views, and by that step admitted himself to have been in error. Grant it then, by way of hypothesis; we must checkmate him again. For the same argument would prove that the Wesleyan authorities were still more decisively in error,—it being well known that most of the objects for which Mr. Kilham contended, have since been conceded. If, therefore, the judgment in the one case has falsified itself, much more has it done so in the other.

Thirdly.—We come to the question of *fact*. Did Mr. Bramwell really concur in Mr. Kilham's views, and not only concur, but co-operate with the latter, in his divisive speculations?

The writer says it is “notorious,” that Mr. Kilham was “encou-

raged" in those speculations by "the preachers stationed in the Sheffield circuit." This notoriety, whoever, appears to have been so contracted or so transitory, that one of the most prominent members of the Wesleyan Society at Sheffield, Mr. Longden, was scarcely, if at all, conscious of Mr. Bramwell's asserted complicity. The writer, however, is determined to establish the allegation at all hazards, and for this purpose quotes—the biographer of Mr. Kilham himself! The proceeding is an unfortunate one, and we wish, for his own credit, the reference were cancelled. The feeling which instigated his wanton attack is betrayed beyond the possibility of recall or palliation, by this melancholy circumstance. Whatever may be the intrinsic merit of Mr. Kilham's evidence—for the biographer of course is but Mr. Kilham's representative—Mr. Kilham is no authority for him.* Would he think of recognising that gentleman either as judge, jury, or witness against the Old Connexion party, in any matter connected with the controversy? Would he be content to determine the "moral and religious character" of the Wesleyan preachers in general, or to hold any of them in particular guilty of "wasting public money," by an appeal to the "Progress of Liberty?" By no means, we presume! Nay, as if for the purpose of rendering this unfairness more palpable, the writer quotes in one page a letter from Mr. Pawson to Mr. Atmore, in which Mr. Pawson terms Mr. Kilham's statements "false and monstrous," and his assertions "notoriously untrue." *In the very next page*, the writer himself resorts to this "notoriously untrue" authority for the purpose of attacking Mr. Bramwell, and avails himself of materials, which—considering the benevolent object in view—must then not only be unimpeachable in themselves, but perfectly conclusive! Under any aspect of the matter, therefore, Mr. Atmore's biographer stands exposed to the charge of gross inconsistency, as well as to all the unpleasant suspicions naturally occasioned by an abortive, but far-fetched attempt at disparagement.

Did Mr. Bramwell, then, connect himself with the controversy in any decisive sense? That he shared in Mr. Kilham's views *to some extent*, may be true; but this does not constitute him a 'Kilhamite,' any more than the subsequent recognition of those views to a certain extent also, by the Wesleyan authorities, constituted them 'Kilhamites.' Partial assent does not imply total approval—much less complete identification. That he did not share in Mr. Kilham's views *entirely*—that he did not share in them *principally*—is proved by the simple fact that he continued a Wesleyan minister of the Old Connexion throughout the controversy. If the accuser should say he *intended* to join Mr. Kilham's party, he must admit he *did* not; and in that admission he

* Here, as in reference to Mr. Atmore, an observation is necessary. It is a matter of obvious justice to say, that in challenging the right to resort to Mr. Kilham's biography for materials to sustain this sinister attack, we do not intend to utter one syllable in disparagement either of the author or the subject of that work. All we have to do is to stop an appeal to its pages by an avowed censor, both of the man and his measures, who would make it authority for the purpose of criminating a few Wesleyan ministers, and deny its competency as to *all the rest*. Beyond this we need not, and do not go.

presents the very antidote to his own accusation. For, if there were any temporary error in Mr. Bramwell's opinions, is it generous, seeing that those opinions were never carried out practically, to drag a venerable shade into the pillory at so great a distance of time, and inflict posthumous punishment, when the error was so speedily discovered, and so readily renounced? The crime (such as it is) was committed in 1797—the penalty is exacted in 1845. The writer may have done what he could, as soon as he could, but why do it at all?

All the *fact*, therefore, which can, under any circumstances, be elicited in favour of the charge would amount to this,—that Mr. Bramwell might perhaps concur, *to some extent*, in Mr. Kilham's plans. But even this partial and temporary concurrence of itself decides nothing. The assailant would have to prove, authoritatively (and not opinionatively) that Mr. Kilham's plans were wrong, and when this was done, he would be just as remote from the object at which he aims as ever;—no amount of concurrence—no amount of co-operation on the part of Mr. Bramwell—if honestly rendered, would convict him of *moral* impropriety. The worst result which could ensue, would be, that the latter did what the best of us do daily,—he erred in judgment.

The writer's premises therefore demolished, he is now left without anything on which to rest an offensive imputation as to Mr. Bramwell's proceedings in Sheffield.

Lastly.—By way of positive disproof we confine ourselves to one view of Mr. Bramwell's character—it would almost be an insult to his memory to think that more would be required. The ultimate object of the accusation is, that he, in some way, tended to disturb the peace of the church of Christ, or did some mischief to the cause of religion. Now, as a minister, he was remarkable for one thing pre-eminently. What was it? It was his zeal in promoting that very cause, and his singular success in adding to that very church! When he entered the Sheffield circuit, after the extraordinary revivals at Dewsbury and Birstal, he carried with him testimonials from *heaven* in favour of his religious merits, and in decided contradiction to the charges of Mr. Atmore's biographer. God had just signally honoured him in the very particular in which Mr. Atmore's biographer attempts to dishonour him. Arrived in the Sheffield circuit—the scene of this apocryphal apostacy—we learn from Mr. Longden, a man infinitely better acquainted with Mr. Bramwell than any modern detractor, and in language which almost prophetically adapts itself to the charge, that “wherever he went, visible signs and wonders were wrought in the name of Christ; and that in the course of his first year, 1250 members were added to the society!” During his further stay in Sheffield, it is indisputable that large accessions were made to the church through his instrumentality, and that the same kind of approbation was accorded to his labours throughout. It is not a little remarkable, also, that when he returned to Sheffield the second time, the same gentleman expresses himself in language

which pointedly exhibits not only the pacific tendency of Mr. Bramwell's conduct, but a disposition utterly hostile to anything like discord. "The dissensions," says he, "which he found amongst us, vanished when we profited by his ministry, and drank into his spirit. The selfish contraction of our hearts was expanded by the influence of his example, and we became as members of one family, sitting under the same vine and fig-tree, and enjoying uninterrupted peace and prosperity." This is a strange portrait to draw of a peace-breaker! If Mr. Bramwell really entertained any divisive intentions, or felt any decided attachment to 'Kilhamism,' it does not appear that the crime—as the accuser may deem it—was seriously regarded by Heaven:—it did not intercept those holy influences which it was his noble office to communicate; it produced no interruption in the work of conversion under his hands! We recommend this simple but significant fact to the profound consideration of Mr. Atmore's biographer. It is pretty obvious, that if a man's agency was thus honoured, Heaven took little note of the pretended eccentricity. If we find an alleged heretic preaching like a Paul, and 'pricking to the heart' like a Peter, we naturally begin to suspect there is nothing in his heresy; or, at all events, that it is a frailty so completely overpowered by concomitant good qualities, as to merit no observation—except from those whose business it may be to count the spots on the sun, and revile the luminary for the slightest diminution of lustre. We are certain that a generous Christian would pardon a trifle of heterodoxy in any individual—say Mr. Atmore's biographer himself—who would go to Sheffield, and convert (under Divine favour) as many souls as Mr. Bramwell did during his stay there. The assailant himself will doubtless think that to promote a revival is a very different thing from promoting a rupture; and that to add to the church is exactly the reverse of subtracting from it. His insinuations therefore—if they imply that any aggressions were made upon religion by Mr. Bramwell—are in direct antithesis to the assertions of Mr. Longden, as well as to the incontrovertible facts of Mr. Bramwell's Sheffield career. Heaven virtually declares that it approves of William Bramwell's zeal in the cause, and services to the church, by giving him some hundreds of souls for his hire, and in pledge of its especial patronage:—Mr. Atmore's biographer demurs! Very well, Mr. Atmore's biographer! It would be enough for us simply to take, on our side, the proud fact that the individual you assail was the favoured servant of the Almighty, not only in promoting religion, but in procuring magnificent accessions to the church of Christ; and leave you, on yours, to make any insinuations, or advance any arguments, with reference to his participation in Mr. Kilham's controversy:—what would they establish? *Nothing against that eloquent truth.*

In the Interpreter's house, Christian, it will be remembered, beheld a fire, and one continually pouring water thereon, yet, nevertheless, the fire did burn higher and brighter, because another stood behind the wall, and poured oil thereon to nourish the flame!

Does Mr. Atmore's biographer suppose these opposite functions could be deliberately performed by the same individual? In the Interpreter's house, they were separately discharged by Christ and Satan.

Is more needed for Mr. Bramwell's vindication? Look then at his life—follow him in his labours! Stir up strife? He did—in the camp of the enemy! Produce division? It was amongst Satan's followers! Kindle fires? It was in the hearts of sinners! The individual who excited or propelled the great revivals at Dewsbury, Birstal, Sheffield, Nottingham, and other places—was he, at the same time, a mere sectarian firebrand? Adding to the church continually—was he dividing and distracting it also? Mr. Atmore's biographer may believe it:—not we—not any one who really knew and understood the man!

The sum of the matter is this:—that if Mr. Bramwell participated in Mr. Kilham's plans, such participation was partial, temporary, and rather theoretical than practical;—that the question was one of judgment, and not of morals or religion;—that it is not even shown his judgment was wrong;—that, whether right or wrong, it was unimpeachable in point of honesty;—and that the whole character and career of Mr. Bramwell are in direct hostility to the character and functions assigned him by his traducer. Further, whatever view may be taken of the question—the assailant must stand convicted of a wanton and invidious attack upon the memory of a venerable brother; the offensiveness of which is aggravated, as we think, by the fact that he has singled out the highest practical attribute of the man for suspicion—assailed him in a quarter where he was the least obnoxious to censure—and depicted him as the antagonist of those very interests, which it was the absorbing business of his life to maintain and promote!

We have treated this matter at more length than the quality of the accusation perhaps really deserves. The spirit, however, which it unfortunately exhibits, and which is too plainly indicated by the elaborate wantonness of the digression, necessitates some decisive protest; whilst the sinister attempt to assail Mr. Bramwell in the most vital part of his character, still more imperatively calls for a refutation. We have, therefore, a double duty to perform;—to vindicate a deceased and disparaged relative; and also to remind Mr. Atmore's biographer, that such exuberant censoriousness as he has displayed, is not to be indulged with perfect impunity. "One of the brightest ornaments" of the Wesleyan ministry, according to the Rev. George Marsden, must not be suffered to wane into a star of dubious lustre, because Mr. Atmore's biographer chooses to view him through a dusky and distorting lens.—We wish the reverend gentleman to understand, that we have endeavoured to deal with him in this article in a far more moderate manner than the spirit and scope of his attack appear to deserve. We have done so, because it is possible we may have

misunderstood his intentions; or that he may have said what an honorable mind, upon maturer consideration, would deem it prudent to withdraw. This we shall see. But in order to provide against other contingencies, such as his silence on the subject, or his persistence in the charge, we deem it a duty to the reverend censor, to convey to him this gentle intimation—intended, however, to operate only conditionally, and retracted the moment any proper attempt at atonement is made—that in case this public notice of his pious labours in the art of detraction, should not elicit a satisfactory explanation, we shall then feel at liberty to deal with him in a more stringent and less sparing manner than we have now done.

C.

Note on Mrs. Bramwell's Death.

Mrs. Bramwell survived her husband nearly ten years. She rejoined him in the 'upper world' on the 15th of March, 1828, having just completed on earth the scriptural term of threescore years and ten. Her death was not unlike his, either in manner or suddenness. Like him, too, she appeared to anticipate the event some time before it happened, and frequently expressed a conviction, arising from the difficulty she experienced in breathing, that she should "go in a moment." The 'last enemy' found her fully prepared, when he entered her chamber one Saturday morning, at a dark and silent hour, and bid her set out for eternity. The struggle was severe, but short. Seized with apoplexy, her agony was so great, that the servant, who came to her assistance immediately on the alarm being given, could not hold her. Yet in the midst of that struggle the name of Jesus—"sweet Jesus"—was constantly on her lip. For a short time she recovered; but again her brain began to swim, and every object around her appeared to be reversed. "Now for my faith," she exclaimed, as another crisis evidently approached—"tell me, my soul, can this be death?" A few more minutes passed—she sank back senseless—the soul silently detached itself from the body—and that noble fabric of clay was soon left deserted and untenanted! It now lies side by side with the corpse of her husband in the burial-place at Westgate Hill:—the spirit-pair inhabit some mansion in the palaced streets of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The following lines were written by one of her children after viewing her remains, over which Death had passed his hand so lightly, that not only was no trait of lingering beauty effaced, but the countenance had assumed a striking air of youthfulness, as if the body, like the soul, had only profited by the rude, but summary revolution it had just undergone.

“IT SHALL BE RAISED IN INCORRUPTION.”

I saw her on her bier, whose spotless breast,
 Like angel's bosom heaved at Pity's call ;—
 Whose voice like angel's whisper—whisper'd rest
 To pain;—yet had she felt the lot of all,
 And deeply drain'd the cup of Sorrow's thrall :
 But murmur ruffled not that brow serene,
 Where Patience sat enthroned in queenly hall.
 I saw her on her bier with heavenly mien ;—
 The rose o'erspread the cheek as once had been,
 When Beauty's tint imparted matchless grace :—
 Youth once more seem'd to dawn, as though the green
 Full germ of incorruption lit that face,—
 O glorious type! the grave *shall* lose its hold,
 And heaven those charms renew ten thousand fold!

D.

Visit to Mr. Bramwell's Birth-place.

A few summers ago, two members of Mr. Bramwell's family paid a visit to the little village of Elswick. They chose a Sabbath for the purpose, in order that they might have access to the places of worship, which were associated with the memory of their venerable relative, and picture to themselves as vividly as possible the scenes of devotion in which he had engaged. Setting out from Preston, they took the path which Mr. Bramwell had so often traversed in youth, and particularly during the period of his apprenticeship. It is worthy of remark, that though this town has increased so largely, and is now the seat of so much commercial activity, yet, at the distance of a few miles, the country reverts to the rural state in which it has subsisted for ages. In general culture, in its hamlets and mud cottages, the Fylde is perhaps little in advance of its condition in the time of our Saxon forefathers. The pilgrims—for it was in the spirit of pilgrims visiting some hallowed spot that the travellers set out—passed several places and objects endeared to them by family associations; and, amongst others, the school-house (or what had been such) where Mr. Bramwell received his rustic modicum of education. At length, crossing an ancient stile, they entered the village of Elswick. Their first proceeding was to make some inquiries respecting the family. Alas, no one appeared to recollect that such a family had ever existed! All memory of the stern but upright father—the gentle, industrious mother—the numerous and well-ordered children—had seemingly perished: the place that once knew them all, and knew them well, now knew them no more. From that very village had gone forth a mighty champion of the Lord, who had carried conquest into the ranks of Satan, and fought his way by the help of his good sword through the hosts of

darkness to a kingdom of light, and a crown of glory: yet no one knew that the triumphant warrior who now shone as the stars in heaven, having turned many to righteousness, had set out for his present brilliant eminence from their very doors. Elswick had furnished at least one illustrious contribution to the peirage of heaven: but his name even appeared to be unknown.

The visitors, however, proceeded to the cottage in which George Bramwell formerly dwelt. It was situated at some little distance on the road. On their way, they met many of the inhabitants returning from service at Cop chapel—just as might have been the case when the little dark-eyed boy, whose career has been traced in the foregoing pages, formed one of the throng of worshippers. On entering the cottage, they found an aged man, perhaps 80 years old, seated in his arm-chair, with his wife and grown-up family around him. *He*, at any rate, had some dim recollection of George Bramwell and his children, having purchased the premises from him, and kept them in his own occupation ever since. The visitors were courteously shown over every apartment; they were informed that substantially things remained in nearly the same state as when relinquished by the former proprietor. The orchard attached to the building was still crowded with fruit-trees. There was a pond by the road—now empty from the excessive summer's heat—and this was doubtless the one into which Mr. Bramwell rushed in his childhood during a paroxysm of pain, whilst suffering from the smallpox. But they looked in vain for a certain walk, bordered with willows, by the side of a streamlet, to which Mr. Bramwell had frequently and fondly adverted in advanced life, when expressing a wish that his habitation were always such a cottage as that of his ancestors. The willows had disappeared: the channel of the streamlet was there, but it was stony and dry. Amongst other little traits of interest associated with George Bramwell's property, was one connected with a neighbouring field known by the title of the "Dear-Bought;" it had been purchased with the earnings of a spinning-wheel, driven by an industrious female relative, and from this fact derived its well-merited appellation.

The visitors took their leave of the venerable pair, who might perhaps have served as representatives of the former proprietors, and certainly tended in no small degree to assist the imagination in conjuring up the scenes and circumstances of bygone times. They proceeded towards Cop chapel, which stands on a hill at some distance above the village; but unfortunately the service was over when they arrived, and not a person was to be seen about the building. The door, however, being open, they entered the place where their forefathers had so often worshipped. Apparently it had undergone little recent alteration, except in the pewing. Need it be said that fancy was busy at its aerial work on such a site? The little singer who had so often filled that place with the sounds of his mellow voice, was no longer there: since then, he had changed from boy to man—from man to glorified spirit; he had traversed the wilderness of earth—leaped the gulf which separates this world

from the world of mystery—and was now soaring nearer and nearer to the Throne:—far away indeed from Cop chapel! His father and mother, his brothers and sisters, who likewise sat and sung and worshipped in the same building, had also (with one solitary exception) returned in flesh to the dust, and in spirit to Him who made them. The Bramwells of Elswick had melted away; other generations had risen, other voices were to be heard in that chapel, and other worshippers to be seen from Sabbath to Sabbath. Truly life is as a dream; but it has its results, and these—how sad or how splendid!

Leaving Cop chapel, the visitors proceeded to the parent church of Saint Michael, a little further onward. Here their ancestors had pledged their faith to each other; and under the green, close-cropped turf of the churchyard, the bones of many of them repose. The building itself was in the same condition as it might have presented years and years ago. The organ was pealing, and a large village congregation filled the place. But to the visitors the graves of their progenitors spoke more forcibly than the pulpit. Thither—to that home of mortality—one after another had repaired like worn-out travellers, and laid themselves down to sleep the sleep of the dead; and if not thither, yet to some similar spot must all their descendants hasten, when they too shall have finished the toilsome journey of life.

And as the Great Pilgrimage of mortal existence terminates at the tomb, 'tis fitting that we, who have traced the career of a memorable man through its earthly cycle, should close it by returning to the spot from which he sprung, and to the mouldering dust of which he was originally a part.



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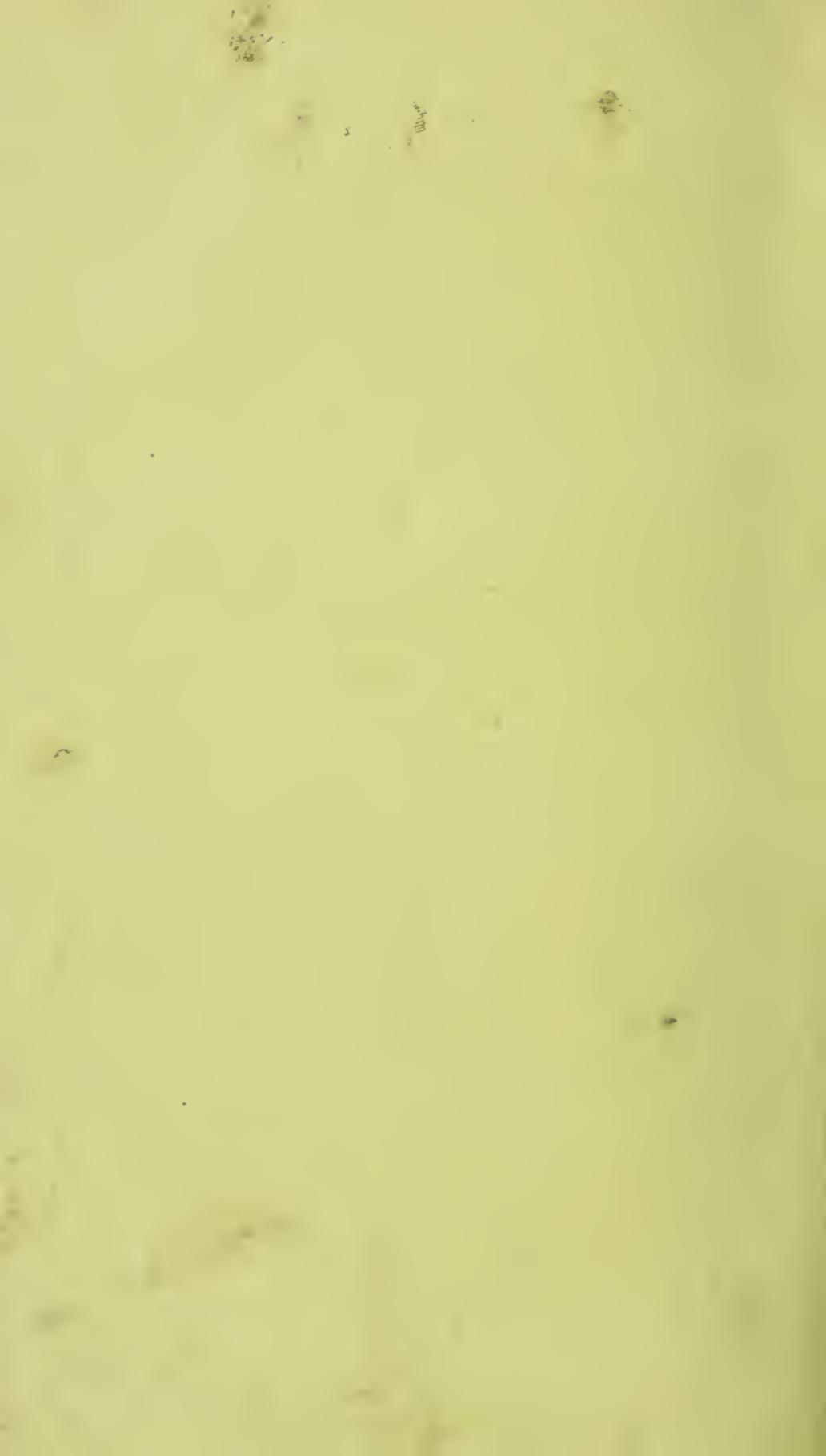
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